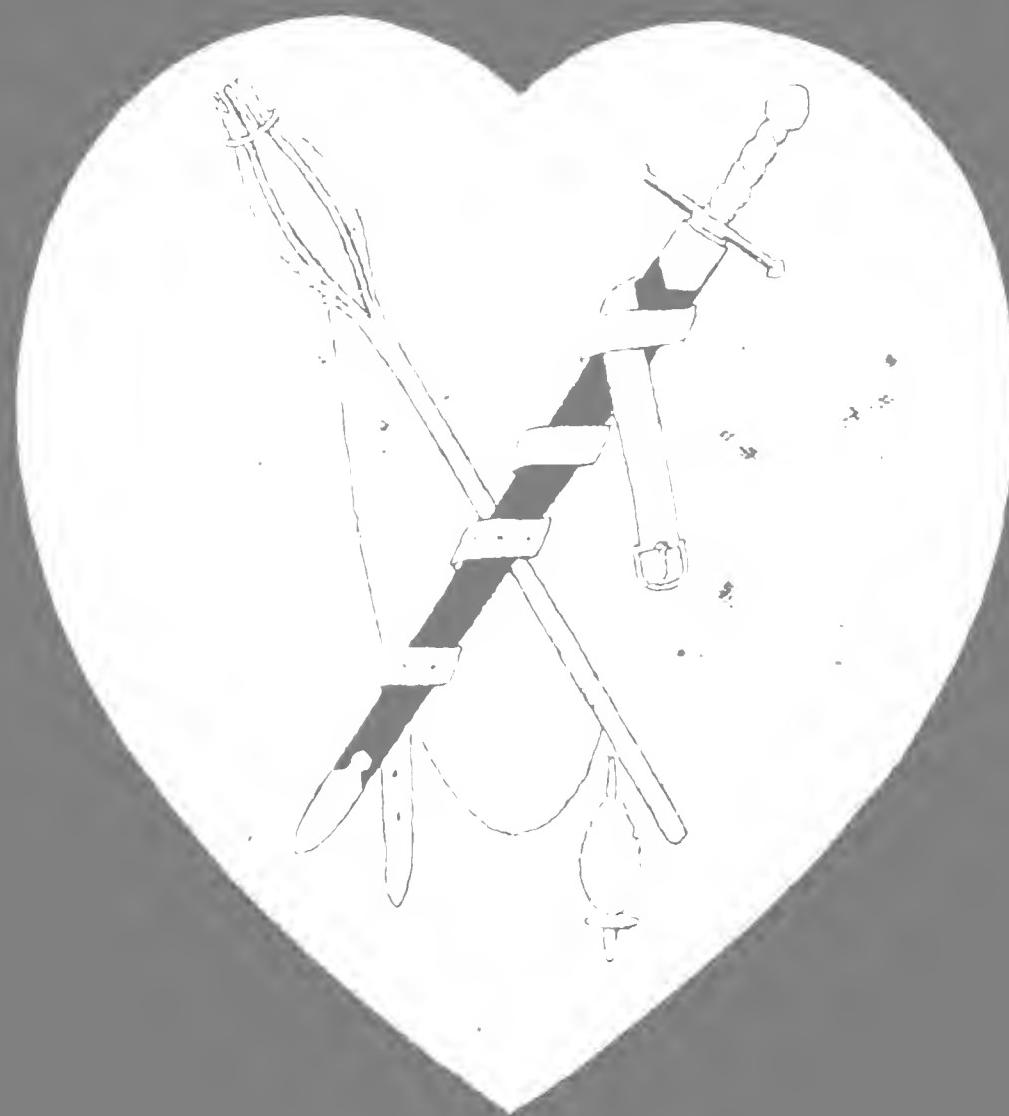


PACK & FILL



MacDonald  
Jack and Jill.

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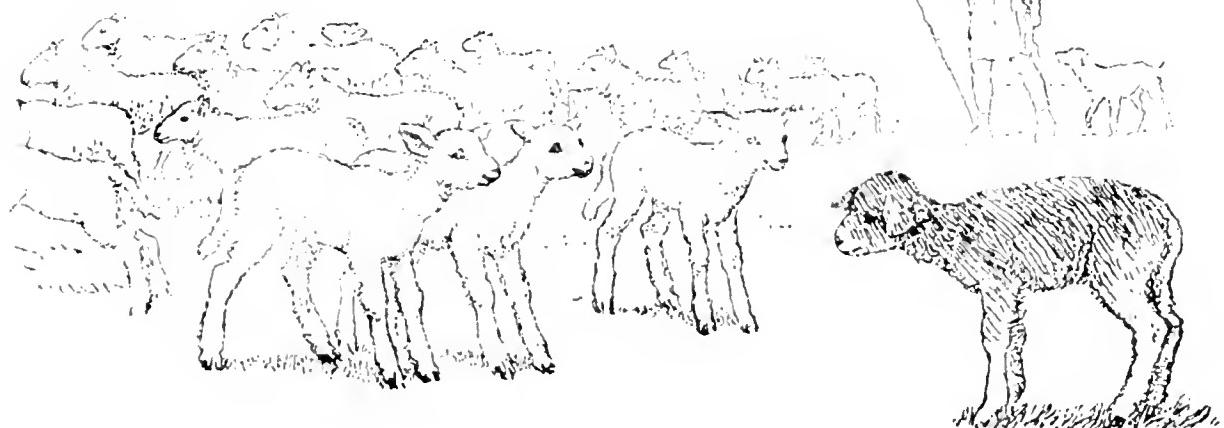




The Second Round.

# JACK & JILL

a Fairy Story



By Greville MacDonald M.D.

author of

Trystie's Quest & The Magic Crook

with pictures by Arthur Hughes

London

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To my nephew Ian MacDonald

WHEN you, a baby, came from heavenly skies,  
Hungry for love and milk and sunny air,  
You little knew what gifts you brought, how rare  
And strong they'd prove in life's great enterprise :  
One was the Magic Sword, that, whoso tries,  
    Will grow in power to do his earnest share,  
    Will find new strength to love, new faith to dare,  
New will, when stricken down, once more to rise.  
O well your Father loved and served the right !  
Sad souls he fought for with this puissant Sword  
To give them joy again in Fairyland.  
His boy must now set out, that Sword in hand,  
To free from hidden den, or binding cord,  
And champion all who need a Christian knight !

G. MACD.



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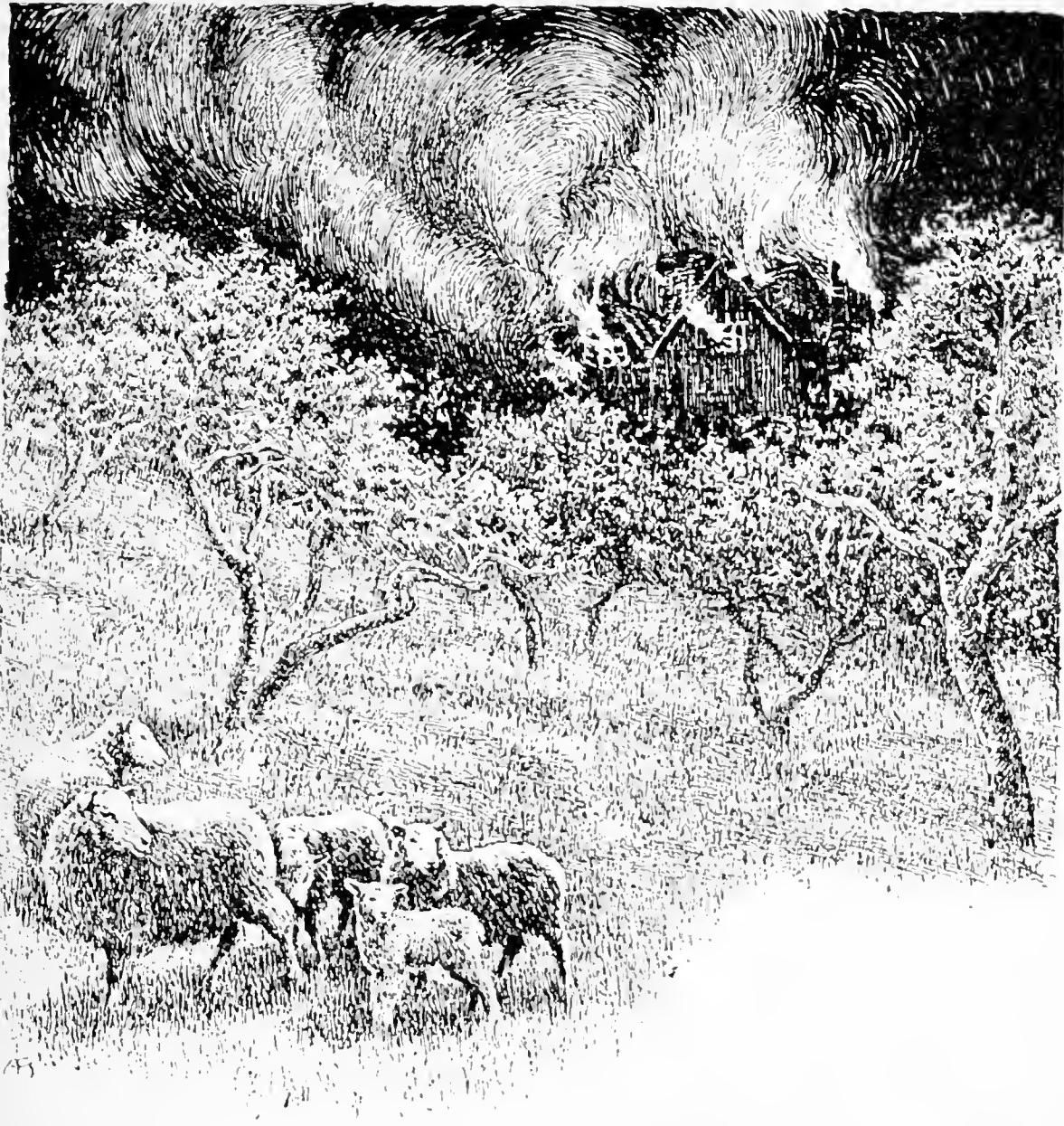
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## CHAPTER I

### HOW WE WERE DRIVEN OUT OF OUR HOME

OUR Twins are a pair of shy, silent things, always hand-in-hand, whether awake or asleep. Jack's eyes are as blue as blue—bluer than that sometimes!—and Gillyflower's—Jill or Jillie we *call* her—are as brown as the goldenest brown ever seen in her God-flower's softest and sweetest petals. When they were babies we used to call

## Jack and Jill

them Tom Tit and Jenny Wren, but they somehow grew out of these. They are seven now, and were six and a half when their real adventures began. Play-adventures they were always having.

This story is all about their extraordinary adventures, which began from that dreadful night when our Farmhouse was burned down. It was directly after that, too, that they got so intimate with Smiling Mary and Mr. Scarecrow. I even wonder if we should ever have found Curdie, our dear bob-tailed sheep-dog, who had disappeared over the hills and far away with a friend of mine six years before, if we had not been driven out of our house and learned that make-shift things are just as good as proper ones and much jollier.

So I will begin the story by telling about the fire.

The very night when we got our last load of wheat into the barn—it's the biggest one for many miles round—and the three yoke of black oxen had pushed their long, curvy-straight horns before them into their byre, quite tired after harvesting in the most perfect weather ; and when Father and the boys had had their supper, while I waited on them, and we all talked of the harvest dances we were to have on Saturday when it would be full moon : that very same night, when we were all fast asleep, except Mother, something caught fire in the kitchen—nobody can imagine what it was—and quickly set everything on fire. Father and the boys were up in a jiffy and got everybody out, though they had to bundle the Twins together in a big blanket and let them down out of their attic window.

Soon we—Davie, Robin, little sister Honeypot, the Twins, and Trystie (I'm Trystie)—were all standing with Mother in the barn huddled up in blankets and counterpanes watching the awful flames. The village fire-engine poured water

# How we were Driven out of our Home 3

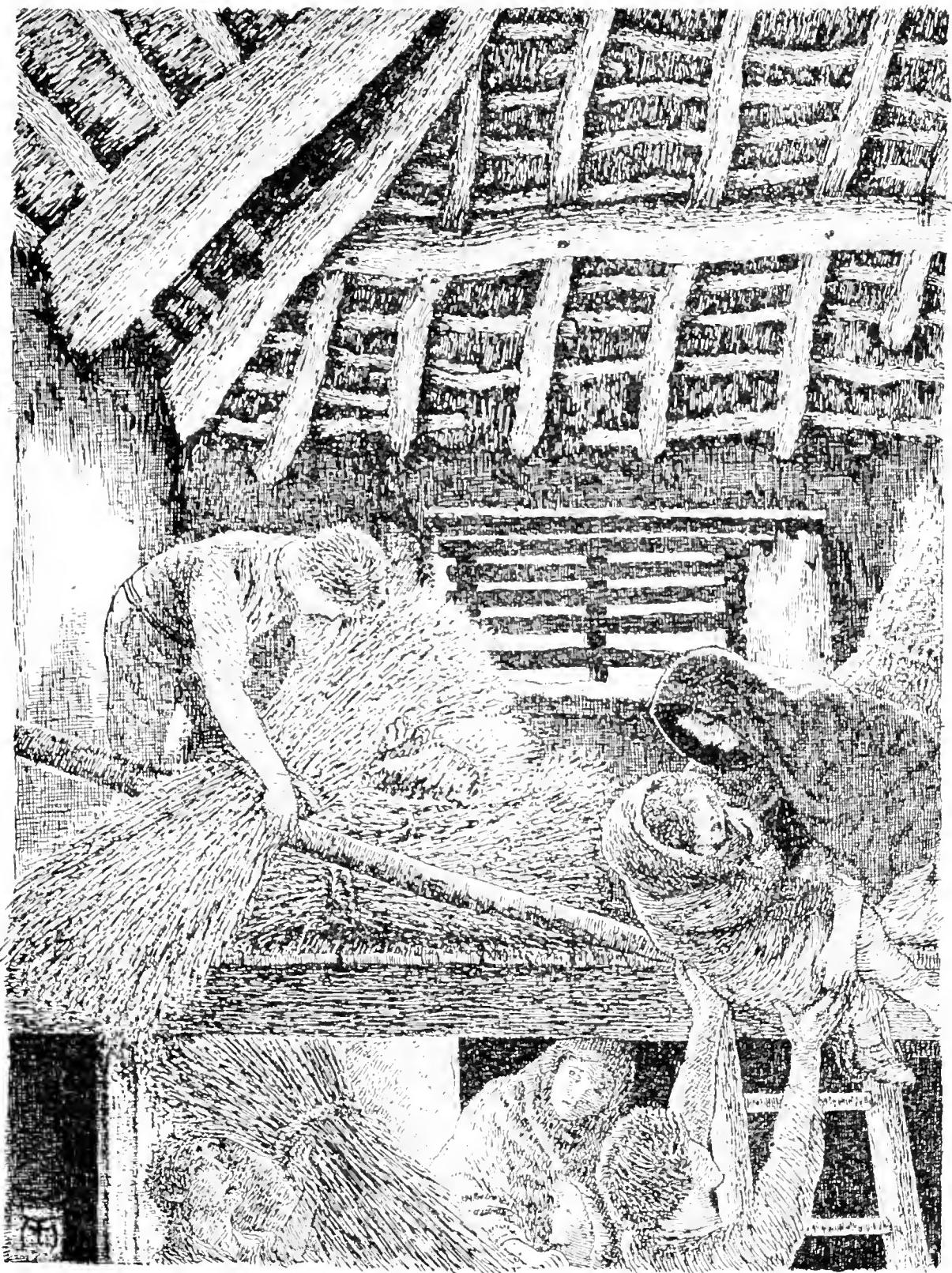
into them. Father and our big brother Kit—he belonged to the fire-brigade—were going to and fro getting things out and giving orders. The flames soon began to die down after a great crash of the south gable roof. But then out of Mother's bedroom window, where the fire was now fiercest, began to shoot wonderful coloured flames ; and the Twins, who for a while could neither stop crying nor take their eyes off the dreadful sight, forgot the anguish of it all and clapped their hands. Green and blue and purple tongues, spitting showers of golden sparks, shot up through the thick smoke and swayed to and fro in the breeze that had sprung up. Father says their colours were proof enough that the beams had really belonged to a ship before they were used to build the house—as was often the case with these sixteenth-century farmhouses<sup>1</sup>—and that the fine colours came from the salt and copper that had soaked into the old wood. The night had clouded over, and it now began to rain in torrents. Then the worst was over, though there was no more hope of saving anything. So Father and Kit left everything to the men and the other two boys, and set to work to make us comfortable for the night, some on the threshing-floor and the rest up a ladder, on a floor in the gable-end of the barn. What with the blankets—Kit got his arm badly burned in getting the spare ones out of the press—and the sheaves of wheat just stacked, we were all safe from harm. Mother and I got very little sleep that night, partly because of the young owls in the rafters being wide awake and snoring, in their comical way, for mice-meat.

<sup>1</sup> Since the Stuart days, it had been no uncommon thing to send down to the nearest seaport a wagon-load of golden grain to receive in payment an old ship's timbers. Our modern Dreadnoughts, Father says, aren't worth a song in their old age, let alone the most splendid timber in the world.

## Jack and Jill

The Twins fell asleep directly. Honeypot, who is nearly two years older than the Twins, as she cuddled with her purple-dyed pet lamb into the sweet straw, whispered to me, "Trystie, isn't it just a weenie bit larks?" and then went off to join the others in sleepland. Honeypot is the merriest imp in the world; she can't take anything seriously, not even fairies! Mother and I talked of Kit's arm, which Kirstie, our old Highland nurse, had dressed, of how we should manage, and many other things. Somehow it was a lovely talk, and I rather agreed with Honeypot. Mother soon got warm, though she had been shivering when Father tucked the blankets all round us. Then she too slept.

I suppose I did also, though it seemed like listening all night to Little People peeping in and out and making a constant tiny rustle among the ears of wheat. They seemed to be taking care of us, at last making even the owlets be quiet; and yet they were full of pranks. They tied knots in the mice's tails; and I distinctly saw them hanging by hand and foot on to the fur of a big black rat that had crept too near the Twins. Then I saw they were tiny little men with green flapping cloaks just beginning to put on their autumn colourings. I couldn't see their faces, though they all had acorn cups on their heads. The moonlight crept in through the tiles of the roof and the cracks in the big doors, but all in such bright and dark patchwork that nothing was plain; and the tiny men seemed to keep out of the light places. There was a little circle of moonlight on the floor just between me and Mother. Into it came and sat up on its hind-legs a white mouse, stroking first its whiskers and then its ears, evidently wanting to be admired by the little men. Then she stopped caressing her face, looked all round her—so that I got a peep of her pink eyes—



SANCTUARY

and then took a somersault leap into the shadows. Soon the moonlight paled and the walls of wheat-straw began to show their glossy and yellow masses in the dim morning light.

But I was still watching for the Little People to come out of hiding again when I began to hear a rhythmic and sharp thud-noise, as if the men were driving stakes into the baked earth to fix tarpaulins over the ricks. But the blows sounded too near for the rick-yard, and the haystacks had been all safely thatched long ago. Then I heard the most amazing twittering and gossip of the sparrows who build in every corner and even under the tiles of the barn. Next the cocks crew loudly ; then I knew it was early morning, and remembered, with a stab of sorrow in my heart, that our home was burned down. But what the hammering was I could not think. I crept softly out with a red blanket over me, and the huge door never gave a single creak.

This side of the barn faces the house and opens on to the old orchard where all the best apples and pears and cherries grow. Smiling Mary, our best and most glorious apple tree, had excelled even her bounteous self in flourish and fruit this year. Her apples were gorgeous in quantity and redness, and I shall never forget how the red sun shone that sweet morning on the wet fruit and sprawling, crooked trunks of the ancient trees. Nor shall I forget the sight of Kit with a long, swinging hammer driving tent-pegs into the ground, although his left hand and arm were bound up and his face was still black with last night's work. He did not see me, but dropped the hammer and then began to make taut one of the smaller rick-cloths which they had hung over the two extraordinarily long boughs of Smiling Mary. Father was on the other side, and they were just

# How we were Driven out of our Home 7

finishing the jolliest little tent. Standing out of its front gable-end poked the dear thing's bushiest bough and richest laden with red-and-gold fruit. She did smile so good-morningly as, with multitudes of apple-cheeks and green tresses, she welcomed us. You would have thought she had done it all herself—quite as clever as Aladdin's genie who built the palace for him in a night.

I ran to Father; he gave me such a hug, and then Kit. Kit's arm was very bad, but he said it was nothing. I said they were all still asleep and we mustn't wake them. Farm-waking noises don't count a bit. The tent was now stretched and the cords taut, and my turn was come to help. The kitchen was burnt out, but the old oak table was only scorched and the parlour things, spoiled by water rather than fire, looked miserable enough, but were quite sound. The dairy, quite separate from the house, had escaped altogether, and the little larder adjoining it was safe also. Consequently, we soon had the oak table and two parlour chairs and Granny's work-table under Smiling Mary's protection. Somehow her gentle shadow always kept the grass green beneath her, even in the driest summer—perhaps she used up all the sunlight for her apples!—and so we had a soft, cool carpet ornamented with daisies and dandelions in the shady room; and that, Honeypot said, made it grander than the King's parlour would ever be. I set breakfast pretty quickly—no tablecloth, and only odd mugs and plates. It was nearly six o'clock when the sun rose, and by half-past six Father had made Mother's tea in a saucepan, and I went back to the barn to see if they were awake. They were, but quite quiet so as not to wake Mother. It wasn't much washing we could do in a milk-dish, though the cold water Davie brought from the well made her feel

strong again, Mother said. Mother had been ailing sadly for more than a year now ; and the Twins thought she would never be well again till Curdie came home.

" Oh, she's brave, that's what she is," said Davie to me—Davie is older than Robin and Honeypot ; his whole heart is in horses and cricket—as we left the tent, he for more hot water, I for butter and another loaf. " Isn't she a regular one-er, Trystie ? "

" Of course she is ! " I assented ; " and isn't it splendid to see her at breakfast again, and just as lovely to us all as if nothing had gone wrong ! "

" And, I say, Trystie ! " he exclaimed, " we'll make this a jolly home in the orchard, while we build the old one up again ! Fancy being able to pick apples off the kitchen rafters ! "

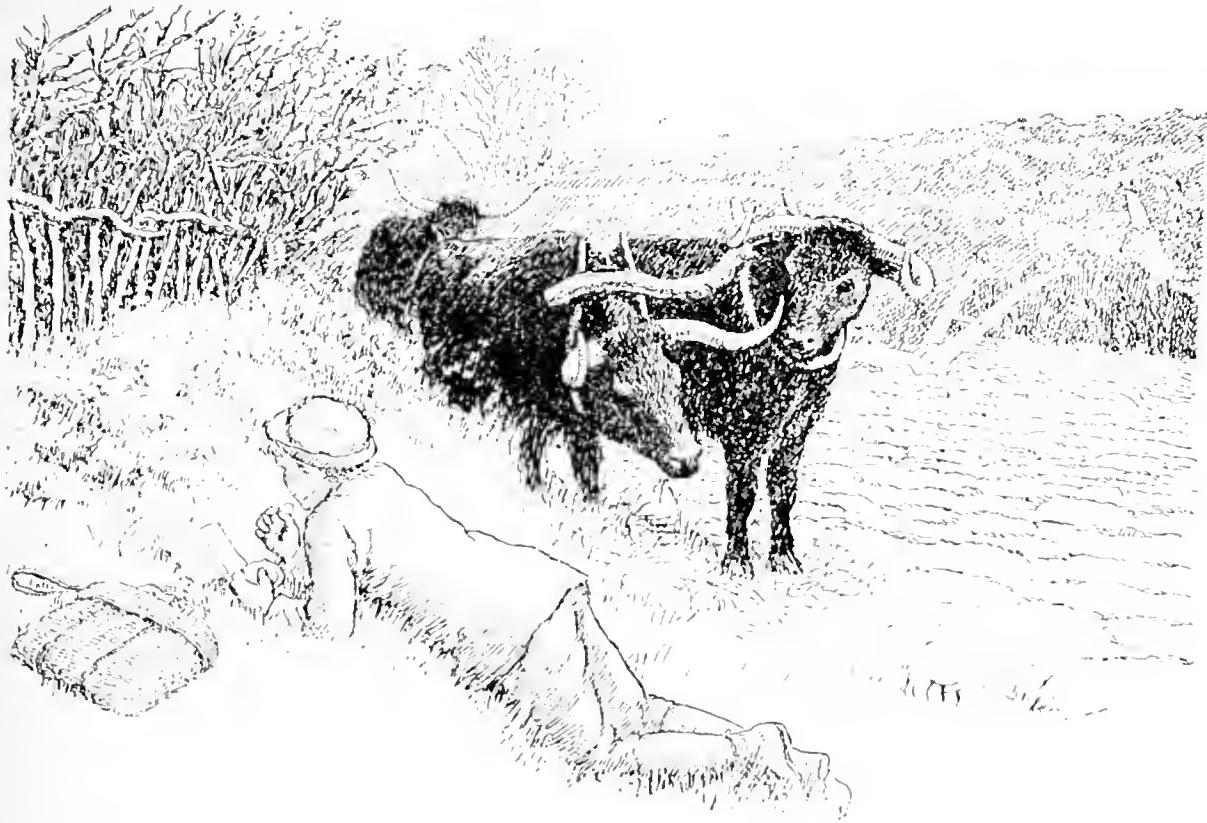
Father says all our boys are handy-men at making things do. Robin is the most ingenious. He had now been away in the tool-house splicing end to end two short, wattled hurdles, after drawing out the uprights where they were to be fixed together to make a bedstead for Mother. He said he was too busy for breakfast yet. The next but one tree to Smiling Mary is another old one ; *Spicing May* she is. All our fruit trees have their own names as well as characters. She too has two outstretching boughs close together, just as though she had tried to copy her older sister, Smiling Mary. But Spicing May's longer one starts higher up, directly above the lower one, and it reaches further and droops so that it almost touches the grass. Under these Robin placed four unused steddle-stones<sup>1</sup> which he had

<sup>1</sup> Steddles are the stumpy conical columns with wide-brimmed capitals on which the ricks are all set up. The rats can't climb them ; that's what they are for. The damp can't climb up either ; that's why Davie used them now.

brought from the rick-yard ; and on top of them he set up the hurdles he had spliced. Then he put a great heap of bracken fern and heather—we keep them stacked together for the cattle's bedding—and on the top of this again four red blankets. This was to be Mother's bed. She said, after her first rest on it, that no queen ever had such a soft, sweet, and springy bed. Over Spicing May's two arms they stretched another rick-cloth and pegged it safely to the ground  
“ And there you are ! ” said Robin.

You can imagine how busy we all were. Father was, well, just Father all over, though he went about all day long with a very anxious face, because of Mother, and I think no one saw him smile but Mother. You see the home-world was to begin all anew—and all in a day. It was all fun to the younger children, but something besides that to us big ones, and not much of it, I am afraid, for Father and Mother. Jonas said, “ Most masters would have been at their wits's ends, but *they* wits of hisn had never got no end to 'em, Missie ! ” The old man, though he got about but slowly, in his white smock and white beard, and apple-cheeks like Smiling Mary's, and his crinkly neck, looked like the Santa Claus of a Sussex orchard, and cheered us all with his slow suggestions and orders. He was often so wise that you couldn't think *what* he meant ! With him to look on, and Father's and the boys' work, and the little ones' help—whose help in their elders' work is always their own happiest play, Mother says—we soon had a new home. The apple and pear trees were our guardian fairies. I and Honeypot and the Twins had two barrel-like gipsy tents joined together. *Leather Jacket*—the green russet, not the brown, please ; there's all the difference in the bite of them when winter sets in—grows through mine and Honeypot's, and the *Bon*

*Chrétien* pear at the end of the Twins'. The boys slept in the barn. Kirstie was afraid of a tent because of her rheumatism, so she had a tiny attic in Jonas's cottage. I believe she puts it right every morning before she appears as fresh as the cock-crow in Mother's tent with a cup of hot tea. Of course, at the beginning the neighbours in the farms and cottages about, and Mr. Johns, the parson, and Mr. Carvin, the minister, all offered to take us in—in pieces. Everybody is such friends to us ! But, I think for us children's sake, Father and Mother decided to keep the home going in the tents till the house was ready again. It turned out to be the happiest thing for us all.



## CHAPTER II

### SMILING MARY AND THE SCARECROW

IT did not take many days for us to settle down to our duties in the new tent life. But over against our happy doings stood the old house, older than any of the trees—it is more than four hundred years old—and looking so lost and gaunt and ghastly. Its leaded casements were gone—all but the iron frames which were twisted into rigid antics. The great wistaria boughs were all black and had fallen away with their scorched leaves curled up. The roof looked like a row of skeleton's uplifted arms, and only the north gable still held up its mossy stone flags, safely roofing the rooms below. Inside there was little left but the heavy oak

joists which the wicked tongues of flame hardly did more than lick and taste and scorch. The outside walls had got no hurt, so huge are the framework beams of oak, and almost as hard as stone with age.

Our life in those shortening autumn days was grand and jolly ; and chiefly because, from the very beginning of it, Mother began to get better. People wondered how this could be ; but, though it sounds stupid, I am quite sure it was nearly all Smiling Mary. One must say what one believes, and that old apple-lady turned out to be such a darling ! Mother's colour came back to her pale cheeks. The larks in the sky began to sing again after their summer rest ; and Mother's sweet songs, after their long silence, were again heard as we lay in our bracken and heather beds. So I dare say it was everything together—apples and lark-songs, and Father's happiness in her betterness, and her springy bed, and the wonderful crisp air of those autumn mornings. Then when she took up her spinning again, we *knew* she was safe, and would soon be well again.

September went by and the lime trees were nearly bare. The ashes put on new bright greens in their second childhood ; the beeches were blazing away as our farm had done, but without smoke or spitting sparks ; and the Michaelmas gales were beginning to blow foamy fairies and flocks over the Downs with myriad masses of belated thistle-down ; while, in the sky above, hurrying cloud-armies sailed away to the north-east. You might think we began to feel that our canvas walls were but poor protection. Perhaps they were ; but Mother says we found something in ourselves that was warmer than we ever knew before, so that we needed much less the house we had left burning. All the men and boys were hard at work in every spare moment,



TRYSTIE AND SMILING MARY

remaking our house's inside. Our own men can mostly do anything from bricklaying to roof-flagging and carpentering ; but we had to get proper builders in to help. It all came very difficult to Father, because he had no money to spare. Only at Midsummer had he bought the twenty-acre field which had been lying fallow as long as I remember it, and given it to Kit for his very own : that was why Kit took to ploughing as well as shepherding. But still, whether it's the plough or the sheep—but not when it's cricket !—he always has his book with him—his Virgil, or *The Fairy Queen*, or algebra. Directly he gets home he always comes straight to Mother. When she was so very poorly she used to get heaps of comfort from his shepherd's pipe. He plays splendidly on it, and Mother loves to see us all dance to its music.

Mother wouldn't let the Twins or Honeypot go to school, as the other children were rather unkind about their make-shift clothes and our living in tents. They would have it they were no better than gips and tramps. Honeypot didn't mind, only laughed. But then, when the Twins wept, she laughed at them all the way home, telling them it didn't matter what they were *called* when they were really a twin prince and princess living in an alabaster palace which only *looked* like a tent. But it was no use. So Mother and I gave them lessons ; which means they had a lot of running wild. Nor did it matter very much.

Small children may skip the rest of this chapter if they like. But I want them to love the two people it tells more about, Smiling Mary and Mr. Scarecrow, because they have so much to do with the Twins' adventures.

Smiling Mary has a way of ripening her thousand red cheeks by degrees, so that from August to October she

drops them at the feet of good children. Her apples are the particular property of us and all other children we like to bring. But we have to eat them as she gives them, for they are best when she lets them fall fresh from the bough and with the morning dew upon them. Unless for a rare thing a grub is hatched in one of her apples, or a rough wind tears them away, she never drops them unripe, but keeps them till they are full of sweet juice and fit for tiny teeth. Then her old grey trunk has holes and hollows, large and small. The highest is tenanted by a starling and his family ; a nuthatch has one just as high as my head—a big hole with a nest inside springy with leaves in layers, and the opening narrowed with plastered clay and gravel ; and between them in a nook, most secret and difficult to find, is a wren's comfortable home. You must never try to pluck the apples, or you are sure to get the wrong ones. I don't know how she manages this, but it's quite true. Mother, before she was ill, often used to make rhymes and songs for us children, and we learned them without trying. But she had done hardly any since. Now, however, she made a new nursery rhyme for our sheltering apple tree :—

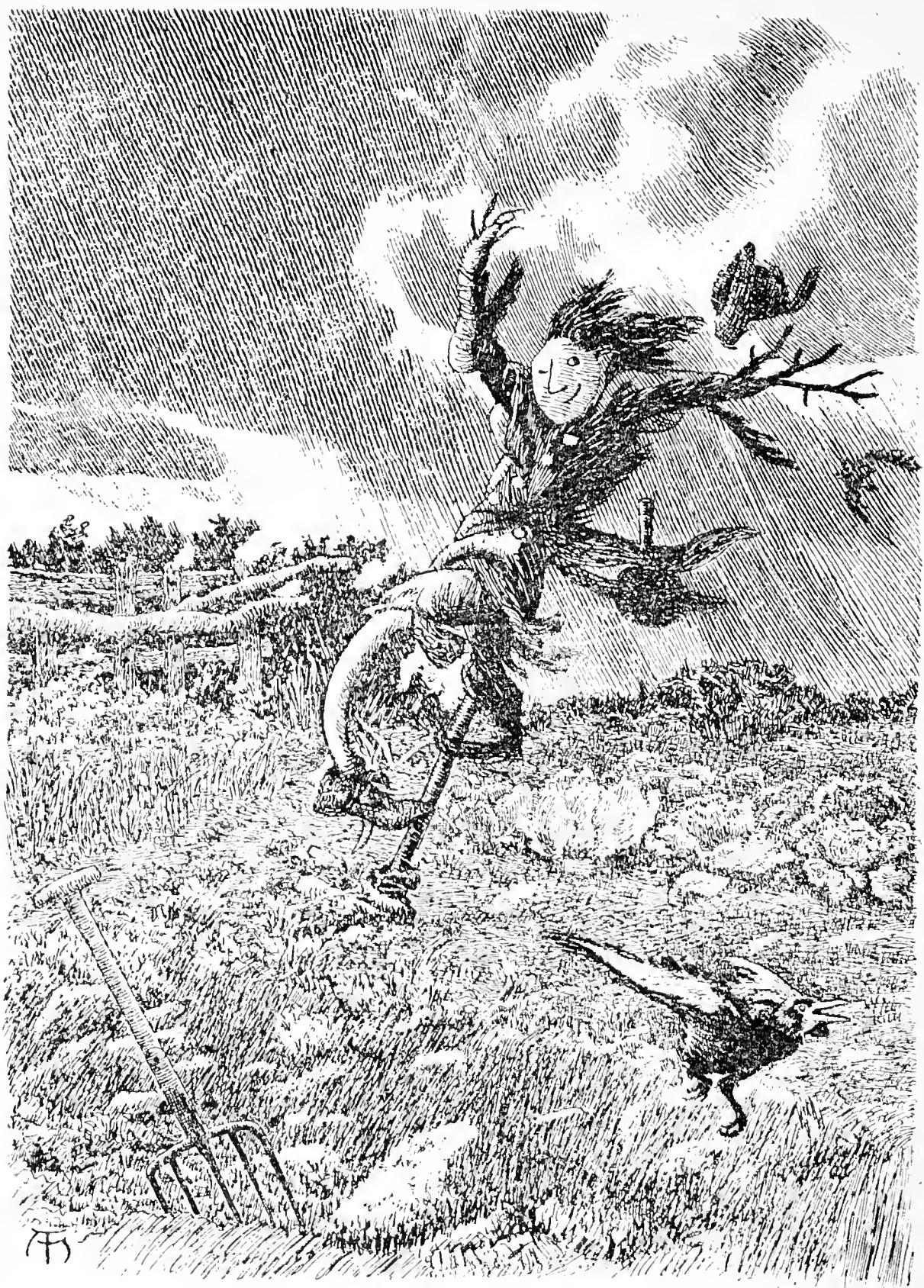
“ Smiling Mary,  
You motherly fairy,  
How does your orchard grow ?  
With its blossomy bells  
And its magic spells,  
And its singing birds all of a row ?

“ Smiling Mary,  
Sanctuary  
Where birdies are safe from the foe,  
And chicks crack their shells  
For to sing in green dells,  
With red apples above and below.”

Now comes the truth about the Scarecrow, who seemed to become important because of the Twins' firm belief that they could wish him many happy returns on somebody else's birthday. They said he never had one of his own, being made in bits and not like children, all at once. Ever since they began to have opinions of their own, they had pitied the poor makeshift of a scarecrow. He had not a leg of his own to stand upon : his left was the long, nearly straight horn of one of our Sussex oxen, and the right a broken broomstick, and each was stuck through an odd, soleless shoe. But the Twins did their best to make amends to him, so that he was much more respectable than many a tramp. Whenever any of us had a birthday, hand-in-hand, they would pick their way across the beds up to the queer old joker, as Jonas called him, bow so low that their heads touched their knees, and quite seriously wish him "*many, many* happy returns of the day ! " They always made him a present too—not at all a difficult thing, seeing that anything will do for a scarecrow. Its head was made of the corner of an old pillow-case, stuffed with wool, the point stitched so as to poke straight out of the face and just a little turned up like a rather cheeky nose. Its eyes were wonderfully life-like—as much as two boot-buttons could make them. Its mouth was a twig of wood turned a little down at the corners, and sewn in place—not very securely. Its cheeks were painted red like an old man's apple-cheek, and a coat of varnish all over the face made the paint secure. Altogether it looked rather sad, rather kind, rather funny-minded, and not quite at home except when Kit's five pigeons settled on its head and outstretched arms. The pigeons are all well-trained carriers ; their names are Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Fanny. They proved to

be very important persons to the Twins in their adventures. The Scarecrow certainly did not succeed in scaring *them*, whatever it did to the crows !

Mother thought the Scarecrow took the place of a doll in Jill's heart. Certainly she never cared much for the little smartly dressed one she had. She kept a little work-box of cardboard specially for the Scarecrow's needs. It held big needles, thread, string, pins of all sizes, and the funniest scraps of clothing stuff, homespun or leather, bits of rabbit-skins or feathers. On the lid she had painted letters as ragged in gay colours and fringes and twiddles as orderliness would allow, "Mr. S. Crow, Eskwire, Hither Garden, The Farm, Steddlecoomb, Sussex." That is where we live. Jack drew its portrait on one side. He draws very cleverly with his chalks ; but Jill spells much better and got a prize at Midsummer. This work-box with another for writing-things, together with Jack's chalks and his toy sword and cocked hat, they had hastily gathered together while Father and Kit were making ropes of the sheets to let them down out of the window when the fire broke out. They knew no fear with Father or Kit at hand. Indeed there were but two things they were ever afraid of : one was the dark, and the other toads. These two fears were very important things in the coming adventures.



SCARE CROW, ESQ.

## CHAPTER III

### ASTONISHING, INDEED !

**C**HILL October flew past, hugging herself tight in her scrimpy wet wings. November the first—a Friday, I remember—began with a memory of summer days, though the only leaves left were a ragged lacework of gold on the tall elms and the strong russet jerkins of the oaks. After lessons the Twins started off with Nanny, the goat, for a run in the coomb that lies across a ploughed field between it and the Downs.

Presently Jill found some very big yet rather tasteless blackberries and ate them ; while Jack, wanting something to tickle Nanny with, who would stop behind to nibble, cut a little stick of blackthorn and whittled it into serviceableness. Kirstie, our old nurse, says that eating November blackberries might make anybody see queer things ; and Jack's cutting that stick would make angry the *lunantishees*, who guard the may trees and blackthorns.<sup>1</sup>

As the Twins came running home hand-in-hand and the goat trotting behind them, nobody the better or worse, seemingly, for their risky if simple exploits, Jill suddenly

<sup>1</sup> Irish people may tell you that *lunantishees* belong only to their country ; but it stands to reason that, if they are necessary to these fairy trees in one country, they must be in another. If such trees don't have fairy-souls, I don't know who has ! Our thorns' presiding spirits may not be *called* *lunantishees* ; but as long as they don't answer to any other names we can call them that without undue familiarity, I hope !

remembered it was November's birthday and they might just as well, she said, wish the Scarecrow "many happiry." Hither Garden, as we call the vegetable garden where he lived, is on the other side of the house from the orchard and barn, and is always rather lonely. Now it was untidy too, because the builders' things made part of it very messy. The Scarecrow was far enough away from all this ; yet, because his work was now all over for some months, he looked utterly disconsolate, and the wind had blown him about shockingly. Robin had made his arms to fly round with the wind, but they had now got fixed and both were pointing over the Downs to the sea. He had got twisted round too, although he had never looked in that direction before.

One thing I must explain in passing. Whenever the Scarecrow's arms got fixed in mid-air—and they often did, in spite of Robin's endless and most conscientious attentions—the Twins always would have it that the ragged creature was pointing the way to his own home, "perhaps in Fairy-land" ; and that if only he would always point the same way, they would know where to begin a journey to find Curdie.

So just now it was more puzzling than ever. The arms ought to point in opposite directions, and they were for the first time in agreement ! Then the support behind, which he sits against when he's tired—and he always *is* tired, Jill says—had gone askew. The consequence was that he looked every inch a vagabond. Jack said he was rolling from side to side when they reached him, and the two had to stop it by propping him up with pea-sticks. Then the two of them, in a hurry, and just a wee bit frightened perhaps, stood in front, bowed low, and got as far as

"We wish you many, *many*——"  
when he distinctly said—they are both quite sure of it—

"Don't want 'em ! Butter my wig if I do !" <sup>1</sup>

Then his arms dropped to his side with a creak. He shut one eye, and the drooping twig that made his mouth so woe-begone turned its corners up towards his eyes, so that you could see he really was a joker at heart.

The Twins in their astonishment sat plump down on the celery bank behind them, hand-in-hand, and looked at each other, three-quarters happy and one-quarter frightened. Then the pea-sticks bent and broke as the Scarecrow began to roll again from side to side. Next, he carefully, gingerly lifted his horn-leg, the left one, out of its shoe so as not to disturb the old mouse-woman who lived there, and firmly planted it in front. But it couldn't get a firm footing—as the only foot it ever had was left behind!—and the point of the horn began to sink into the soft celery trench in front of him. Mr. S. Crow would have rolled right over if Jack had not very promptly jumped up and set his shoulder against his side and then propped him up with the blackthorn stick he had cut, Jill helping to make it firm in the ground. The stick reached high enough for the ragged left sleeve to drop over its knotty handle.

"Now you'll get along tidier, Sir," said Jill, with a little tremble in her voice, "and we can safely leave you, I think."

"Besides," added Jack conclusively, "I know it's dinner-time. So good-bye, and we wish you——"

"No, no !" interrupted Jill, in a hurry, "not of to-day ! It's—it's—only a month's birthday—not people's." At

<sup>1</sup> This Sussex expression is used only by simple, old-fashioned, yet lively people. It suggests the utmost finality in cocksuredness.

which reminder she felt, I think, that any seeming discourtesy was fully explained and would be forgiven.

They came running into Smiling Mary's kitchen-parlour in a wonderful hurry. Mother was just turning a potful of steaming, floury potatoes into their wooden bowl and nearly dropped it when she saw their white faces.

"Mr. Scarecrow, Mother, I think, I think——" began Jill and then stopped, not knowing what to think.

"P'raps he's coming in to dinner," added Jack, as if to prepare us for a queer possibility. "But," he added, "he really is a joker! And it's a lovely game we're having!"

Robin had been giving me a hand laying the table.

"I'll cut and see what's up with him," he said to the Twins. "We'll soon set him up again if the wind has bowled him out or upset his works." And he was off, while I took the Twins to wash their hands at the pump.

In writing the story I want to be as precise and truthful as ever I can. You might think that, as I wasn't with the Twins when the Scarecrow spoke, I could not know how they looked and exactly what they said, though they would of course tell me what *he* said. In a way you are right and in a way wrong. You see, I know those children so well—just how they look and talk and think—that, when they tell me of any important happening, I know at once what the little surrounding happenings would be like. In the same way, if you tell me Kit has been ploughing and turned up a field-mouse's nest, I know exactly what he would be thinking. Or, if you say that a flock of starlings rushed away from him into the copse and there started their sing-song like a merry brook—what the Twins will have is laughing—I can see his happy glance thrown up to them. In just the same way, if the Scarecrow spoke those words—and of course he

really did—and *if* the children had to prop him up and keep him from falling when he took his leg out of its shoe, I know that the little ones looked and spoke almost exactly as I have said. So it is really more truthful to tell the story in this way than to give no particulars merely because I did not actually see them.





## CHAPTER IV

### MORE UNUSUAL HAPPENINGS

ALL dinner-time the Twins were very quiet and their eyes very big. Robin was gone rather a long time and dinner was done when he came back from his visit to Mr. Crow. He told us the wind had knocked the old joker about, but that Jack's stick was propping him up finely. The strings and wheels he had put inside to make the arms go, were out of gear and their box smashed : he would leave them alone now, he said, till the early sowing after Christmas. But he

had more to tell us about the old woman field-mouse. He said he had had a good look into her nest in the soleless shoe. She had about fifteen children—all twins—and an aunt, though some of them might have belonged to the aunt, he said. Underneath the shoe were two deep, wide rooms lined with moss, and awfully stuffy. The young ones were all sleeping in one room and the other was chock-full of acorns. He told Jack that the aunt-mouse told him they had to pay very heavy rent to their landlord for the use of his shoe, and that now he had cleared out they were going to keep all the acorns for themselves. He said the old woman was quite young, had such a long tail, such big coal eyes, such a white shirt-front going right underneath, and such a jolly reddy-brown coat. Jill believed most of this, but Jack looked as though he believed it all.

After dinner, as they both looked tired, Mother made them lie down on their little beds in *Bon Chrétien's* tent. Kit had saved those beds almost the last thing when he got the bad burn on his forearm. I don't think they could possibly sleep if they were separated ; and no one yet ever saw them in their beds without holding hands across. Once, when Jack got the measles, we had to separate them. But neither of them got a wink of sleep that night. So we let them sleep together the next night and decided to run the risk. They both had them nicely—a bad business well over ! Now we tucked them up safe and warm, and in two minutes they were fast in dreamland. I left them, as I had to make Mother be busy about the same business with Spicing May, or she would have done all the washing-up. Father went off to the horses directly after dinner. Kit had eaten his like a proper ploughman, under

the hedge while the cattle got their fodder. So we were quiet enough, and even I fell asleep that sunny afternoon.

It seems that the Twins, after about an hour's sleep, were so wide awake that they got up. Finding us all so quiet, they would not even disturb me in Smiling Mary's shady tent. They started off, intending to go and watch Kit at the plough. A cool breeze from the south-east was blowing over the Downs and through our own snug beech coomb ; and where the lane runs from the road straight into its heart, they met a whole crowd of red-and-gold beech leaves racing towards them. They stopped to have some fun with them, and the rustling, hurrying, tumbling-over-and-under, down-and-up-again, leaves rushed round and round them in a whirlpool, tickling their bare legs, and singing a rustle song :—

“ Rush, rustle, and leap,  
 Crowd, crumple, and creep,  
 Out from the crannies and wind-swept coomb !  
 Light, loose, and deep,  
 Our gambols upheap,  
 And tumble in waves to the witch-wind's broom.

“ In coats of gold leaves  
 With red and green sleeves  
 We fairies rush dancing away from our home :  
 Some hide in low sheaves,  
 Some seek in high eaves :  
 For Fairies it's playtime wherever they roam.

“ The trees gaunt and bare,  
 Like skeleton Care,  
 Look up to the skies till the buds peep again ;  
 Then crowding up there,  
 We, thick as your hair,  
 Sing fiddle-de-dee to the whispering rain :

## Jack and Jill

*“ ‘Fairy leaves in emerald sheen  
O no, never change their green—  
Never from our mother fly  
Till the witch-winds bid us try !’ ”*

The twins then started running up the lane to meet these crowds of autumn leaves, and found themselves knee-deep in a little sea of crinkled gold wavelets.

“ Jill, I’m a ship in the sea making the waves tumble ! ” shouted Jack, pushing the deep dry leaves from side to side.

“ And I’m Kit’s plough in the fallow-field,” answered Jill, “ and I make the earth-waves roll over.”

“ Don’t you remember, Jill, Father told us the plough was the ship of the fields ! ” said Jack, as they pushed and kicked on one side the golden, red-and-green, crisp little crowding waves.

Then the wind blew the autumn sea against them, and away it went behind them, rustling and scampering back through the lane. So the Twins turned and joined in the mad whirligig race, which now was all rushing about their feet and even scattering up their backs.

When in two or three minutes the wind dropped and the beech leaves began to settle down, one very gold-and-green sycamore leaf, splashed and streaked with crimson, still ran on, rolling from point to point of its edges like a wheel without its tyre. It was queer enough that this one should continue the game after the others had settled down ; and just because of its bright colours and steady pace, stopping occasionally till the Twins nearly caught up with it, and then on again before they could touch it, they just *had* to follow. Round into the road it turned its steady somersaults, always on edge, sometimes almost settling down, then up again just as they thought they would catch it. Up another

narrow, long-grassed lane the strange leaf rolled, till it leapt over the lowest bar of the gate that leads back again into our own vegetable garden with the Scarecrow in the midst. Soon the Twins realized that the leaf was bewitched. For, no sooner had it jumped through the gate, over which the children had to climb, than it began to make straight for the ragged gentleman, but now turning very slowly on its points. Then they saw it was no mere leaf, but a ragged fairy child in motley, turning somersaults from feet to hands, from hands to feet again. The two ran after him as fast as ever they could, you may be sure ; and there, just by the Scarecrow, he was standing on the edge of the deserted shoe, holding out his acorn cup as if for pennies, and kissing his other hand to them just like any circus child.

We think, Kit and I, that then there must have come into the Twins' wondering eyes and hearts a tremendous understanding of how the fairy world, its sweet playfulness and merry serviceableness and wintry patient sadness, is all one with the common world that shines for everybody, even if they have no fairy blood in them. But, of course, Jack and Jill could not have *said* a mere thought like this. Perhaps you have to live with it through many growing-up years before words can give it a shape ; but *I* don't know. Anyhow, the children have astonishing memories and remember things like songs with music, or dances with colour, or queer conversations very exactly. Jill now and then will correct Jack as to a word, though the wrong one he uses is, Mother says, very likely the one that ought to have been.

Jill put out one finger to touch the sycamore sprite ever so gently—as if he was only a bubble and might pop and disappear : but, at that very moment, the wind suddenly

leapt up again and carried him, looking more like an autumn leaf, right up into the blue, sunny sky and then away and away over the Downs to the sea. At the same time the Scarecrow's right arm began to swing to and fro, but higher and higher, as if lifted with some difficulty, till it remained fixed and pointing the way the sycamore leaf had flown.

"Jill," said Jack, "you know Mother says we've got to obey people what we love. So I s'pose we've got to go that way somehow."

"I don't think we exactly *love* Mr. S. Crow," objected Jill. "Besides, he's only a dressed-up thing."

"He's got *works*, and *people* have works—to make them run," asserted Jack.

Jack was the quicker of the two to give his affections. Jill always looked at a new acquaintance very funnily before she would be even polite. Now Jack's remark somehow made her look up again at the strange figure : it was still fixedly pointing over the Downs, though the wind was keeping everything but its arms and head in a fury of excitement. Even its legs seemed as though they were trying to walk.

"Jack," Jill said, "he does look realyality kind, and p'raps we've got to obey him. Oh dear, oh dear ! and there's his sleeve got slit up by the wind. Let's go and fetch his work-box."

"Let's," assented Jack ; "it's a lovely game ! "

Then the Scarecrow spoke the second time to them :—

" This is the coat that Jack built.  
This is the wind that tore its tails,  
That flapped in the wind like shortened sails,  
That laughed at the Scarecrow, all forlorn,  
With buttons of brass all tattered and torn :  
A stick in his hand—just a twisty thorn—

And one leg a straight—not a crumpled—horn !  
It kissed the cock that crowed in the morn,  
And woke up the cat  
That killed the rat,  
And chased a field-mouse,  
With a shoe for a house,  
And just so many children she didn't know what to do !  
While Jack and Jill  
Ran up the hill  
To join in the fun and laughter,  
Then away o'er the Down  
To the Fairy Town,  
And everyone tumbling after.  
And . . . ”

But there he stopped short.

The Twins stood hand-in-hand much astonished.

“ He speaks poetry, but ragged,” said Jack.

“ It almost came undone, but got nicely mended,” assented Jill ; “ and he knows a lot about things.”

“ Will you take us to find Curdie ? ” shouted Jack to the Scarecrow, rather loudly, because of the wind.

“ He *is* found, far, far away. But we'll go and let him find us—butter my wig if we don't ! ”

“ Then that settles it ! ” said Jill.

They joined hands and ran away home, while the Scarecrow called after them rather like singing :—

“ I'll come and fetch you, at half-past nine :  
Pack up your work-box, needles, and twine !  
For the moon blows strong and the wind doth shine  
And the stars drink deep of the dewpond's wine,  
And the starlings come sipping the salt sea brine,  
While lambkins, as woolly as porcupine,  
All dance to the jigs of the twittering kine !  
Come over the Downs, come over the sea,  
To the land where young scarecrows are waiting for me ! ”

## Jack and Jill

“ Winds rise and rend me,  
Witch-birds attend me,  
Tossed like a lost ship at sea !  
O, Jack, befriend me,  
O, Jillie, mend me,  
Mad ragamuffin I be ! ”

As they ran faster and faster, the song died away. Outside Smiling Mary’s tent they stopped, panting.

“ He *sings* poetry now ! ” said Jack.  
“ Patchwork,” assented Jill, “ and all undone ! ”  
“ But it *sounded* nice,” said Jack.  
“ Silly *I* call it,” insisted Jill. “ Fancy *young* Scarecrows ! I’ve had trouble enough with an old one ! ”

“ Just think ! What a lovely game ! A family of Scarecrows ! But, oh, Jill, if only we could really bring Curdie home ! ”

I think I have said before that the Twins did not remember ever having seen Curdie. But we were always talking of the dear old dog with his thick, shaggy, curly coat of homespun hoddengrey, and his shining ruff, which, as everyone who remembers him knows, would always shine in dark nights on the Downs, showing the way home to everybody who loved him. I said before that he had no tail—his kind isn’t allowed one. But he wags just as well without. Jonas says it is the most human-like dogs that haven’t got one ! But though the children did not remember him, they had always heard so much talk about his wonderful doings—and, indeed, from Kit, of his funny, wise sayings—that they looked upon him as a most important person who would come home again some day and make Mother quite well again.

## CHAPTER V

### THE JOURNEY BEGINS

THE Twins looked uncommonly happy as they ate their tea that night. Their eyes were shining, and after almost every mouthful they held hands again. They said nothing, and looked as if they were both thinking the same thoughts and wanting to be gone again. Mother said to me that they had walked too far and were tired, and she wondered if the Scarecrow had frightened them. But we did not ask them where they had been since their sleep. I think Father and Mother always made a point of not asking what we children had been doing or where we had been. They gave us much more liberty than most children have, the consequence being that we had heaps of adventures and always told everything. We were all chatter-boxes, too, except me ; and I whistle to make up, Mother says.<sup>1</sup> But that evening the Twins had not one word to tell us. I didn't think they were overtired either, because very slowly and thoughtfully they got through a big tea—bread and butter, raspberry jam, and their favourite dish,

<sup>1</sup> *Footnote by the Twins' Mother.*—Trystie always whistles when she is alone, but never seems to know it. It is lovely to hear the child, though she never can do it if we ask for it : then she sings. Her whistling is very bird-like in measure and scope ; and, though sometimes we can say it's a nightingale, or a blackbird, or a wheatear, or a lark even, it always is so song-like that you want the words.

curds and cream. It was nearly six o'clock when they had done, and then I put them straight to bed—or rather they put themselves, so quick and tidy they are. Then Mother came and sang their little hymn with us; and by half-past six they were fast asleep and hand-in-hand across their two little beds.

Well, we did the rest of our duties. Kit came in to supper really tired with the plough—or rather with the team. Young Sandyband—the black ox which has the queer yellow belt across his shoulders—had been very erratic in behaviour, as though, Kit said, he was willing to do any amount of work if only he needn't do it straight. Davie had been beginning his more serious work with young Diamond, the grey colt, and said he never had had such trouble before. We have three colts now, so that Davie has his hands full; but one isn't weaned yet. Robin had been fixing a pump to the dairy well. He said it wouldn't draw, though the valves were perfect and it had oceans of water to pull from.

"I believe," he said, "that old joker of a Scarecrow is at the bottom of it. He's gone anyhow. Perhaps, Kit, he was sticking Jillie's pins into Sandyband, and spanking the colt."

Then Father came in, and the boys asked him who had cleared away the Scarecrow. Father said he saw before dinner that the thing had shifted a bit in the wind, but as he came round by the dairy just now and saw it gone he supposed Robin had taken it into hospital for an operation. Well, we discussed it, but didn't say much more, as the boys came to the conclusion that Jonas had done something with the faithful custodian of our vegetables and wall-fruits. Jonas sometimes takes things into his own

hands just a little bit too much, we think, though we give him his own way, as he is such an old friend.

We are mostly all in bed by nine o'clock—which, Father says, must seem strange to town-folk ; but then we are up long before sunrise this time of year, except Mother and the Twins, and we work hard and need a lot of sleep. But we all say we don't want so much now we sleep in tents : I suppose our sleep is sounder and sweeter. I think we did our work better : certainly the Twins invented more games than ever and Honeypot more mad escapades. Perhaps Smiling Mary had something to do with it.

Almost the same thing happened next to both Mother and me. She woke after a little bit of sleep, because she had been dreaming so vividly about Curdie and imagined she had seen him walking with the Twins. She woke wide, she says, and saw Curdie actually standing by her bedside, his ruff shining in the darkness so brightly that she saw plainly the three last remaining apples of Spicing May looking quite red. She put out her hand to pat him, and he rubbed his head and ears into her arm in his old way, wagging all over. She noticed he had no collar.

“Curdie, Curdie !” she called out to him, jumping up to put her arms round him. But in a moment he was half out at the tent-curtain, and, by the time Mother was there too, he was nowhere to be seen. She called him softly so as not to wake the Twins or the tired men. But I heard, as I was awake too, and had also seen the dear old dog ; and I ran to Mother.

This is what I had dreamed or seen—I don't know which, unless it was both at once. Feeling something soft on my bare arm, I awoke and saw Curdie. His forepaws were on my low truckle-bed, his muzzle resting on my arm. His

brown eyes looked as though stars shone deep in them, and his ruff was shimmering with moony light. I lay and looked at him, quite fascinated, I think, and terrible happy, as we say. Now I can't say I heard any words, though I knew they came from him to me.

"Trystie, Missie," he said, now gently wagging his hind-quarters, and rubbing his left ear on to my open hand, "can you trust the old dog still?"

"Oh, Curdie!" I think I said, "you're not a day older, and of course I can! Don't you love us all still?"

Then he nuzzled his muzzle into my neck in reply, and trotted away.

"Stop! Curdie, stop!" I called after him, jumping up quick enough, you may be sure. But he was gone. Then I pulled the counterpane over my shoulders and heard Mother softly calling him, and went to her.

We both went and told Father and the boys. They came and called and searched. But no trace of Curdie could we find. They said we had both been dreaming, and persuaded us to go to bed again. But first Mother went to peep at the Twins.

*Their little beds were empty!* On the pillow was a slip of cardboard—it was the end of the lid of Mr. S. Crow, Esquire's, work-box, and had been nearly broken off for some days. Jack had written a message with his blue pencil on the cardboard.

"Good buy, Mother and Father and All. We are going to fine Curdie with Mr. S. Crow.

"Hopping to see you at brekfest

"I am your loving little Jack.

"me too, Jillie."

Then Mother and I understood Curdie's message to us both : it was just this, that he was going to take every care of the Twins, and had been sent to tell us so. We knew he could be trusted. Once, a long time ago, he had gone over the Downs to look for Father when he went to find Honey-pot, a baby then, who had been stolen by fairies—rather silly ones, some of them were. Then, when I had to go to my Godmother, the Queen of the Fairies, to find Kit, because the Pigwidgeons had made him King and nearly killed him by starving, Curdie was there too and helped us both splendidly. He once brought them a message back from me in a fairy purse when I first met Captain Leprecaun. But the purse and my Fairyland shoe—my best treasures—were burnt in the fire ; and I had, I don't mind confessing it, a jolly good cry over that ! Always if a sheep was lost Curdie seemed to know by instinct where it had strayed. We used to think when a ewe died, leaving a shaky, curly-woolleyed, bleating orphan to be mothered by Jonas or Kit, that Curdie comforted it most by telling it of its Mother gone to the fairy pastures. Anyhow, there never was a dog like him.

But although Mother quite believed in the message, and Father and Kit also, as well as myself, of course Mother had to have a terrible cry.

" Were there ever such children ! " she exclaimed. " It would be better to live altogether in Fairyland or right out of it, and not on these borderland Downs ! "

" But, Mother dear," I said, to comfort her, " we're nearly altogether in it, you know ; and that's why things aren't all easy and plain. Godmother told me so."

Then Mother hugged me, as only she knows how ;

and I soon got her to sleep. But her head was very bad again in the morning. The Twins did not come home to breakfast as they had hoped, but we got a message from them that eased Mother's mind and made her patient.

But first I must tell exactly what happened to them. It was somewhere about half-past nine o'clock—a clear, slightly frosty night, and the stars wonderfully bright—that they heard the Scarecrow's voice calling them. They had been fast asleep, but were not a bit afraid, because they had been expecting him.

"It's time, Master and Missie Twins," he said in a clear whisper, "for us to be off. It's all right. I have been sent for by the Queen, and I'm told to bring you, because she wants you. And your Mother needs Curdie very badly. And Curdie wants to come back and stop. And the old woman in my shoe is well provided for—and we've seen to that—me and the crows. And Miss Trystic will comfort Mother. And——"

Then he stopped : they soon found he generally did stop at a loose end, like his sleeves and buttons and breeches and mossy wig. The loose ends in his talk too always provided for something more being tacked on should it be necessary.

Jill said not even tramps went on a journey without some luggage, and so they must pack up first. To begin with, they dressed themselves as carefully as usual. Then Jill tied up the work-box and made Jack take two other boxes. One was a little one holding tiny pink note-paper and envelopes—a flat wooden box, black and shiny, with a picture of the sea and ships on it in mother-of-pearl, with the words "*A Present from Pixhaven*" in gold letters. The other

was Jack's own box of coloured chalk pencils. He tied all these together very firmly, and swung them over his back, with his big pocket-knife hung by its strong cord round his neck. Then they brushed their hair, and Jack tied the hair-brush up with the other things.

"We can't go without leaving a message," said Jill. Then she saw the end of her cardboard work-box had come off in the tying up. "This'll do nicely!" and Jack took a spare blue pencil from his breeches pocket and the two together wrote the letter I have already given.

The letter done, Jack remembered one more thing he *must* have—his little wooden sword that Robin had made him. Its blade was covered with silver paper, and its hilt was painted red and green. He buckled its belt and his sabretache tightly round him, and then set his little cocked hat—I had made that—jauntily on his shaggy, yellow head.

"Now I'm all right," he said, "and the game's going to be jorgous!" He was very fond of the word *gorgeous*, but couldn't, or wouldn't, pronounce it right.

All this time the Scarecrow was politely waiting for them outside, softly singing to himself. Directly they were ready the two went and joined their friend, and soon all three were walking happily and warmly over the cool Downs. The Scarecrow held Jack's blackthorn stick in his left hand. In his right—it was such a warm and kind hand, though hidden in rags tied round with a bootlace—he held Jill's left hand, while Jack kept her other one safe.

Before many minutes were over they knew their old friend more intimately than you would think possible.

Mr. S. Crow often sang, or rather chanted, his words, and often made funny, rough poetry of them. He had only four notes in his voice to use ; but you can do more music with these few, I think, if you are friends with the birds, than you can in two and a half octaves of notes and don't know any fairy folk intimately.

They tell me it was so fresh and sweet on the Downs in the starlight, shining brighter every step they went. I know how wonderfully silvery and clear the starshine gets as you come near Fairyland. It is crisper than sunshine and doesn't take the colour out of things as moonlight does. But somehow—I can say it only one way—it seems to take the thickness out of everything.

They sat down, and Jill began to unpack the boxes, because she could now see that Mr. S. Crow would soon need some attention from her needle and thread. The wind was blowing cool and strong and made him look very tattered and torn, though the twins themselves felt quite warm and happy. As Jill was undoing the string, Jack called out :

“Look ! Look ! They’re all coming after us ! ”

There, not far behind, they saw Nanny—my goat, you know—with her foster-child, Honeypot’s purple-streaked lamb—Streaky it was now called—cantering up the hill to join them ; while up in the starlit sky were Kit’s five homing pigeons, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Fanny.

“I whistled for them to come,” said the Scarecrow, “and so they knew ; and they wanted to see the stars—and——”

But I must break off for one moment to tell you how the lamb got dyed. Last May, Mother mistook a bottle of

blackthorn dye for a bottle of her own hedge-pig wine,<sup>1</sup> and the grimace Father made when he sipped it was lovely to behold. He said it was lucky he didn't swallow it or he'd have had purple hair and eyes and skin all the rest of his days, and would have gone about ever after dressed like an ancient Briton—though “their dye was blue woad, not blackthorn,” said Honeypot, “and so you couldn’t, Father!” That young imp got hold of the bottle of dye the next morning and washed her pet lamb all over with it and soap, so that enough of the colour bit in, in streaks and patches, to make all the flock look at it reproachfully, if not with deep suspicion. Now to the story again!

As soon as the two animals reached them, the Twins made every fuss about them. Nanny was hugged till she began to butt the Scarecrow in fun and nearly knocked off his right broomstick of a leg. Streaky was groomed very carefully by Jill with the hair-brush. The pigeons circled round and round their old friend, and then all perched on his shoulders.

When all were comfortably settled and Nanny had begun to nibble the short grass and wild thyme, they started on their journey in earnest, and began to converse.

“I rather wonder,” said Jill, “if you ought to leave your work, Mr. S. Crow.”

“I think you want a holiday, Sir,” said Jack; he was more respectful than Jill. “Scaring must make you terrible tired—most when there’s no birds and no fun about.”

“Do we keep you warm, playing games and mending you up?” asked Jill.

<sup>1</sup> Hedge-pig is the Sussex name for sloes. They make lovely wine, and it's tonic.

# Jack and Jill

Then their ragged friend began a long answer in poetry :

“ You sew me together  
 And patch up my woes ;  
 You mend me with leather  
 To keep out the weather ;  
 You pin in a feather,  
 Or sprig of red heather,  
 To scare away hundreds of scatterbrain crows.

“ *O, everyone knows*  
*That scaring the crows*  
*Makes starlings, the darlings, all laugh in the trees !*

“ O, nobody knows  
 The larks that I have with those terrified crows !  
 They bring me red cherries,  
 And spicy black berries,  
 And hedge-pigs and spicy blue sloes ;  
 The squirrels bring nuts from the coomb ;  
 And old Smiling Mary  
 Comes tripping, dear fairy,  
 Her sunniest bonnet  
 With apples upon it  
 Or arms full of branches in bloom.

“ *O, everyone knows*  
*That scaring the crows*  
*Makes starlings, the darlings, all laugh in the trees !*

“ The joke of it was,  
 Believe me, because,  
 When I whistled aloft to the breeze,  
 The wheatears come trooping,  
 A-singing, chat-whooping,  
 From over the Downs and the seas,  
 To pick up  
 The seeds,  
 Or kick up  
 The weeds,

Then diggle the worms from their holes,  
And slip them inside  
Their beaks open wide—  
Quite safe from the gluttonous moles !

*“O, everyone knows  
That scaring the crows  
Makes starlings, the darlings, all laugh in the trees !*

*“ Then larks left their nesties,  
Blue tits preened their breasties,  
And all came and listened to me.  
And when the white snow  
A surplice did throw  
Over my shoulders and knees,  
A sermon I preached,  
And the field-mice I teached  
Where they sow the potatoes and peas.”*

Here Jill, getting a little tired, interrupted him.

“ *Teached* isn’t English grammar,” she said.

“ P’raps it’s French,” said Jack.

“ *Teached* isn’t taught—not at our school,” said the Scarecrow, with a twinkle in his black boot-button of an eye. “ So it must be *taught*, I think.”

“ Please, Mr. S. Crow, you’ll oblige me by always *saying* taught when you are with us, whatever you *think*,” said Jill, “ and please say the last bit of the poem again, and right this time.”

Then the Scarecrow went on quite blithely and innocently :

*“ And when little Jillie  
Began willy-nilly  
To sew up my tatterdown words,  
The field-mice I taught  
And a sermon I prauth  
On the sin of scarecrowing the birds ! ”*

"Does that match better, little School-teacher?" he then asked, as the Twins looked at one another, puzzled as to their duty in this new difficulty.

"I don't think I know, Mr. Crow," answered Jill; "somehow you *must* make your words tidy, you know."

"But I don't think it's tidy to pretend things match and belong when they don't," argued the Scarecrow. Father says his logic must have been as lop-sided as his legs, if the Twins' report is correct—which I know it is. "So," their friend went on, "if things don't rhyme without twisting their sense or breaking their backs, why, butter their wigs till they do! That's sense, little Master, isn't it? And——"

The Scarecrow, as usual, didn't end his remarks, and so Jack answered the question.

"I think it must be, if you say so," he said very politely; "but, please, what's the sense in butter and wigs?"

"I'll tell you what the pig said," answered Mr. S. Crow, very kindly. "'One more acorn down my red lane,' he said with a grunt, 'that makes sense and bacon-fat; butter my wig if it don't!' Now, I'll tell you what the little fairy up the tree said: 'One more acorn down in the ground,' she said, laughing, 'makes a great oak tree. That's *not* sense, I'm sure,' she said, 'not even when the squirrels build houses in my boughs and chatter nonsense and butter their wigs all day long! But it's lovely and true all the same.' That's what *she* said!"

Jill couldn't understand at all and thought the kind, ragged person needed something mended. So she looked him all over, found a fresh tear in his right knee and cobbled it quickly together. He stood quite still while

# The Journey Begins 45

she was at work and told them this interesting little tale :

“ A cock when reproved by a scarecrow—  
‘ You dandy, Sir, how can you dare crow  
Over my rags and my tatters unmended ’—  
Replied, ‘ Gentle Sir, you are really quite splendid—  
With your brass-buttoned coat, and your red and green breeches—  
Yet you’ve always more rents, spite of needles and stitches,  
For think ! When Jill mends one, the best of the worst,  
Two others, more draughty, more rag-taggy burst ! ’ ”



## CHAPTER VI

### THE TWINS WRITE A LETTER AND GET NEW SHOES

BUT it will never do if I quote so many of the Scarecrow's rhymes. I have taken down heaps of them from the children, neither of whom, though they repeated them a dozen times, would differ more than a word or two in their versions. One point Jill is quite certain about. She assures me that whenever their friend's words or the meanings got very ragged, she knew she must at once stitch up some fresh tear, or patch up some thin place newly worn through. The two helped each other in the work. Jill always did the actual sewing, while Jack often had to persuade edges to keep their place without straining old stitches of adjoining seams. Their stock of materials would soon have been exhausted but for the supplies they found on the hill-side. Kind sheep had rubbed so often against blackthorns and brambles that the Twins were able to gather quite a lot of wool. Then outside rabbit-stabs—as we call the little holes down which the baby rabbits are brought up—they would sometimes gather a useful supply of that softest silvery hair which the mother rabbit plucks from her breast to carpet her nursery with. Jillie had already learned to spin a little with the spindle, and Jack was quite an expert with his bone knitting-needles. The clever country little boy soon whittled a spindle for his sister from a spindlewood tree, and a pair of long needles

for himself. So that they were able to make thick, rough, woolly patches to meet the Scarecrow's worst needs. The thing that puzzles me is to account for the time they must have spent on this earlier part of their journey—especially when I think how few days—as we measure time—they were actually gone from home.

Steadily along sheep-walks or across spinneys and coombs they journeyed up the Downs, happy enough in conversation and work. Often they sat down for a nice meal of mushrooms and filberts stewed in Nanny's milk. There were also the delicious potatoes that grew, they tell me, quite plentifully on the top Downs. We are to go an expedition sometime to find the potatoes, and then we will try some of the Scarecrow's recipes ! I asked them how the cooking was done. Jack answered that of course Mr. Crow had the rusty saucepan with the hole in it in one of his coat-tail pockets.

" But what about the hole in it ? " I suggested.

" Oh, that's all right," he said, " he put a flat stone inside."

This we must accept as proof, I suppose, that necessity is the mother of invention ! In Fairyland, you can boil milk in a sieve, if you must.

But, had they already got so far ? you will wonder. Yes, indeed ; because all the time, they tell me, the stars were growing bigger and bigger and giving more and more light. They sparkled like anything ! Their light sometimes seemed to shoot out of them like fountains, and at other times to run out of them like rushing brooks or waterfalls with shining, coloured stones, or tumbling roses and waving tulips, or starry cornflowers beneath the water. Other shining, quiet gaps in the blue night were the planets, the



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THE MILKY WAY

Scarecrow told them. These grew as big as moons and brighter, looking like tiny, far-away seas with the stars lighting up their little sparkling waves.

The Twins were as happy as young birds, and for a while must have forgotten everything but the jolly, wonderful journey. They came before long to a part of the hill-side where there were more flowers than grass. There they sat to rest. Jill began to milk the goat, but found the generous creature had already given them all her store. But she just said in her sad tremble, "Neigh-neigh-never mind! neigh-neigh-never mind! neigh! neigh!" and ran to browse upon the flowery grass. In two minutes she came back and Jill drew from her the creamiest milk they ever had tasted. Somehow it was already tea-time. As they all three were seated so happily enjoying their food, Streaky, who had been amazingly frisky all the long day, began to roll over and over in the starry little flowers and then came frisking up to Jill looking as white as snow, with not one streak of colour left. The pigeons too began to feed upon seeds that were scattered everywhere, though hidden by the flowers.

There was a great quiet over everything. Mr. S. Crow was gazing raptly up into the wonderful stars. He took his queer hat off and threw it whirling back over the path they had come. It seemed to look directly like a fitter-mouse—that's a Sussex bat—flying away, its wings going faster than the rest of it, and squeak-squeaking in its agitation. Suddenly Jill put down her spindle and Jack his knitting. She plucked a red-tipped daisy, he a blue don't-you-forget-me-not, as they both still called it. "This is for Father," said Jill. "This is for Mother," said Jack. "Better write them a letter," said Mr. Crow, "and we'll send it. And——"

So they unpacked the paper and envelopes and chalks

and between them wrote the letter Mother got at breakfast the very next morning after they left us. We knew by the spelling that they had written it together, turn and turn about.

“ My darling Mother and Father,

“ We thre are quite wel. All hope you are too. Nanny ran dry but et sum of these flours and then Jill milkd lots. Mr. S. Cro’s sorspan has cum usefull, and the hole doesn’t matter. Some stars here are as big as turnips and much runnier. Some are planits, Mr. Cro says, wich menes they are ezactly like dewponds and glitter in the sun though it isn’t up yet. Jack gets on nicely with his knitting. He is drawing Mr. Cro’s hat flying off like a bat,— which sounds like his potry, but isn’t. He makes yards and yards rather patchworky and often doesn’t fit with the real nursery rimes. The Cuckoo’s bread-and-cheese flowers is all over the grass everywhere but on fairy trees.<sup>1</sup> Here is a dontyouforgetmenot from Jill and daisy from me. Here’s something for Trystie—it’s thistledown she likes best. There’s too many things here to choose to send to the others except kynd love in which Mr. S. Cro joins and Nanny and Streaky.

“ Hopping to see you all at brekfast

“ I am,

“ Your loving little twins,

“ JACK

“ JILLIE.

“ P.S.—Mr. S. Cro seems more gentlemanler up here and quite as nise. He’s terrible kind to us too. We do luv him.

<sup>1</sup> The Cuckoo’s bread-and-cheese tree is what we call the may tree.

He nos lots and, Mother, his scaring cros was all pretend because they woodn't be. Tell Robin he does fine without the works, but the arms don't wag so.

“ JACK.

“ P.S. another.

“ He's quite tidey now because I keep my eye on them and when they begin, a stitch in his side saves nine. Tell Kirstie, please.

“ JILLIE.

“ O yes, I forget sumthing. We are so sorry we came without saying where. We couldn't *tell* where. So didn't perhaps. Mr. S. Cro says its Curds and Way, or Milky Way, I forget which.”

When the letter was done—I still can't think how they found time for it, a long affair at best for such mites!—they folded the two sheets of paper, put them in an envelope, both licked the gum—that was the *grand* part of the business always—stuck it down, and gave it to the Scarecrow. He then whistled for one of the pigeons, and Matthew came. He pulled out from his sleeve the last thread Jill had sewn up a rent with, and tied the little packet under the bird's wing. Away and away she flew and came down into the deep sky which now seemed to be all amongst the innumerable starry, scintillating flowers growing so thickly in the firm, winding path they were making through them. They tell me the little white flowers were so thick and springy that you couldn't fall into the sky underneath. May blossoms on bewitchingly tiny trees, stitchwort and Stars of Bethlehem (some people call them *bird's-milk*), snowdrops streaked with green, blackthorn flowers like fairy snow but with only soft prickles, daisies, eye-bright, forget-

me-nots as blue as "young-eyed cherubim," lilies-of-the-valley ringing out wee music, a few stately archangels, asphodels and eucharist lilies, cornflowers blowing little tunes from their trumpets, and starry thistles; and every blossom of them shining so bright with its own sweetness that the Twins must have felt they were walking the path along which Mother Day comes every morning to open the windows of her sister Mother Earth's wide house. They don't tell me all this—only make me think it.

One most interesting thing is that they found out how the stitchwort got its name. When the Scarecrow drew the thread out to tie the letter under the pigeon's wing, there was left a long rent in his sleeve. Jill, with her usual patience, and yet perhaps with a little sigh, began to thread her needle.

"Try stitchwort," said the ragged creature.

Hardly knowing what he meant, she plucked a many-headed specimen with a long stalk. At the end of it was such a shining needle that it dazzled her eyes so that she couldn't see how she did the sewing up with it. But however it was done, the torn sleeve, she says, "didn't look like wanting mending any more, but was better tore 'cos it let you see he had a shininger coat under." So they set to work gathering stitchwort and packing it into the work-box; but the more they packed in the more it went right through, somehow, into the blue outside. So they had to be content with only one piece. Then they pulled long branches of traveller's-joy—bethwine, we call it, or old man's beard—and decorated Nanny and Streaky and even twisted little bits round the pigeons' necks.

The Scarecrow was wonderfully careful of the children, and after their tea made them lie down under an old haw-

thorn for a nap. To make them sleep he told them things. They would very soon, he said, have reached the beacon point of the hill and then would go down into the heart of Fairyland. He told them to have a good look at the hawthorn tree they were under. They saw then that it was one they knew so well and often played games with—one at the top of our own coomb. It had a big hole in its side which they could just reach. They used to make up stories about the little lunantishee, the boy-fairy, who stood inside, just where they were not quite tall enough to see. He stood by a little gate made of silver bells and cockle-shells. He used to tell them to grow up quick because his tree was so old it might go to heaven before they were big enough to come through his gate. But he used to add, “ You Twins will find me somewhere if you *don’t* look for me.” This had been a funny play-trouble to the two of them for some months past—to find a thing you wanted without looking for it ! They named the tree Prince Lanty, the nearest they could get to the long name of *lunantishee*. But now Mr. Crow told them more and made them understand that the hawthorn was really a fairy tree and not only a play-at-fairyland one. He said they must pack up some of its blossoms and that whenever they wanted to send a message home they would need only to take one between their joined hands, close their eyes, and repeat this rhyme :

“ Fairy bird, please, in the name of the Queen,  
Carry our letter safe under your wing ;  
Fly to the Farm on the land down below—  
You shall have blessings wherever you go.”

Then, when they opened their eyes again, their friend continued, they would find themselves standing in front of

the old tree at the top of the coomb, and must immediately put the letter in the hole. But if they tried to run home dreadful things would happen. They must obey him and the Queen exactly if they hoped to find Curdie and take him safely home again.

"One more thing I have to say, Jack and Jillie," the kind creature said, while they looked into his eyes and wondered how it was that, being so kind and gentle, they could ever have looked like boot-buttons—except for their blackness—"the one thing is this: if ever you find yourselves alone, keep tight hold of each other's hands and then Smiling Mary or perhaps the Queen herself will be close at hand. Now, you have had a lovely nap. While you have been asleep we have reached the Beacon Star and must wait till you get your shoes."

Then they took their eyes off his, and looked about them. A little higher than where they sat they saw a great fountain full of such bright water that they could hardly look at it. It was at the very point of the hill above them and came running in little rivulets on every side. It shot up into the air, broke into jewels and sprays full of rainbow stars, and then fell with a splash into the coomb. You could not say whether it was water playing with light and jewels and flowers and butterflies, or light itself tossing the water about and breaking it into shining things, as if Naiads and Dryads were carding, spinning, and weaving the waters to make green tents and flowery gowns to hide in. Such a rhythmic, tangled splash and press of light and colour and living spirit-power! And the singing of it was just like everything playing games, Jack said.

Yet for all the running water about them, the Twins sat on the dry grass and thyme of Downland. Nanny and

Streaky were cropping their breakfast as if things were quite usual, and the five pigeons were quite at home on the Scarecrow's shoulders. He was sitting down a few paces away, with his back to the old friend of a hawthorn tree.

"Somebody's given him new shoes!" exclaimed Jill. He had a pair of green pointed shoes, looking as if gathered just fresh from the water. The long point was tied into a loose knot and ended in a little cluster of flowering rush. They had no loose lace-ends or holes. Also they saw he had a pair of quite shapely legs in green stockings, though his breeches were as patched and ragged as ever.

"And what a *jorgous* fountain!" exclaimed Jack. "And how the water runs and never stops to get deep! And oh, Jillie! There's a little green boat coming down our brook—and somebody in it! Look! look! Mr. Crow!"

The rivulet by their side had been getting deeper and quieter till it made a little rushing river, with flowering rushes, yellow and purple flags, and meadowsweet in its banks.

The boat came up to the bank and out of it jumped a shining fairy man dressed all in green. He went straight up to the Twins and, to their surprise, kissed them both.

"Trystie's old friend, it's meself, General Leprecaun," he said, "it's meself am the master of this starland you have come to. Explain it will I, if ye've not learned it all from me old friend, Misther Crow. Starland is ivery bit of it green mountains—except for the valleys—and they're all green too unless it's the golden wheat they're growing at all, at all! The top of ivery mountain is a star—you've seen them often from the Farm and Downs maybe. And the pure waters from the stars' deep springs gallop away like flocks of sheep downhill to the valleys; it's them,



GENERAL LEPRECAUN

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more betoken, that bring the good life to the fairy folk—my folk, you know, little Twins, and Curdie's and yours."

"And Mr. Crow's," added Jill, not in question, but assertion, as if everything was now explained.

"It's right you will be, Jillie," he went on. "And ivery child of us comes to Fairyland when his new shoes come home."

"Oh dear!" said Jack, foreseeing terrible difficulties for themselves. "Ours haven't—'cos they were burned in the fire and they were *quite* new."

"It will be the Fairy Cobbler only that can make the fairy shoes, little man, and it's meself am that same. You will have learned at school that only a leprecaun can make a real shoe to fit a real child to travel in real Fairyland!"

Then he took out of his pocket two pairs of shoes looking exactly like the jewelled rainbow water, but strong and soft, and with such beautiful bows. The Twins knew at once that the shoes were for themselves.

"You first, Jillie," said Jack; "ladies first!"

The kind and gay General went on one knee to the children and fitted the shoes himself. The fit was perfect. Then he sprang into his little boat again, waved the children a farewell, and somehow made his way upstream and disappeared.

"Shall we ask Mr. Crow if he would like our old shoes for his children?" asked Jill of Jack.

But before the boy could answer, the laces of the old leather shoes stiffened and split into four little legs, and away they scampered downhill.

"It's *most* astonishing!" exclaimed Jill, as if the remark was sufficient to the occurrence. Jack said nothing, but stood staring after the shoes long after they had vanished.

Jill took Jack's hand again.

"Let's sit down again and look at our new shoes," she said.

"Let's," said Jack, as usual.

But the funny thing was that as soon as they looked at the shining things they only remembered other things. They seemed so near home, just by the fairy hawthorn. They thought it must be nearly breakfast-time, that I should be looking for them perhaps, and that they wanted Mother's good-morning hug more than anything in Fairyland. Indeed, it was generally so. Sometimes if they began to look at their beautiful rainbow shoes they seemed to have their old ones on and to be going straight home. Often if they looked at the shoes without thinking about them they would start longing for us all so much that they would cry. Not for long, however, could they weep ; because the adventures they were engaged upon soon demanded all their attention. There were some difficulties and even some very sad things before them—and that although Fairyland is so lovely.



## CHAPTER VII

### THE DRAGON WITH THE LONG TAIL

PERHAPS I had better explain things a little bit before going further with the Twins' adventures, lest you say, with Jonas, that I am "beating the Devil round the gooseberry bush"—which means making too long a story of it.

In that part of the world there were troubles afoot. I don't know how wrong things ever get into Fairyland. I am sure nothing can begin to be bad after it gets there. But, whatever the explanation may be, very wrong things are sometimes found in Fairyland, and the Queen, even with her great army—all her real subjects fight for her when she needs them—has almost more to do than she can manage. So good children have to come and get fairy shoes and help.

The troubles just now were all caused by a Dragon. Whether or not it ate people up nobody quite knows, but it damaged them so badly that they were hardly of any more use. It lived in a castle looking like yellow brass, with deep dungeons and a keep. There was no well or fountain or spring of water anywhere within the walls. The castle stood on the top of a bare mountain with a black cloud hovering over it. It separated the two valleys, called Jocundy and Valgrif. The Dragon enticed or stole little maiden fairies from Belmarket: that was the name of the

little town where life was sweet. It kept them in its castle until they had wept all their stock of tears into a deep pool standing in the courtyard. That was a dreadful thing to do ; but, poor beast, it had no other water to drink and was terribly thirsty—as anybody would be who liked drinking salt tears ! When it left the castle it never drank of the rivers and brooks or quiet tarns of the hill-sides, nor of the water that was always flowing merrily and splashing in the river that ran round the walls of Belmarket. It was horribly afraid of all water other than salt ; so that you might think the danger to the little fairy town, with its pure river always racing round it, was not very great. But it was a subtle beast, that Dragon ! It lived for the most part all alone, though it had for twin-sister a powerful witch. It was so big that they say it nearly filled up the courtyard of its castle, with its long tail curled round the keep, and its flat, green head looking over the brass walls and motionless, except for a gentle swaying to and fro. One or other eye was then always asleep, while the other blinked, and a black tongue lolled out of its silly, grinning mouth. At night its head was kept inside the walls, but, though both eyes then went to sleep, its black tongue kept awake and hung down into the pool of tear-water, drinking all through the long night. Unlike most dragons, it did itself more harm than anybody else ; and the harm it did itself was drinking, drinking, drinking. The more it drank, the thirstier it grew.

How it caught the busy and kind fairies none of them ever would tell. When they were at last rescued, they could not remember anything that had happened. So I don't think the Dragon hurt them much at the time. But before they were rescued, as you shall hear presently, the sorrow

was bad enough. As soon as the Dragon had got every possible tear out of them—and it had all sorts of cruel ways of making them cry, chopped-up onions, pepper, mustard, and horse-radish to eat—he drove them out into the Valgrif. Thence they could not find the way home, and so had to go and live in Raggaplas. Their shining, fairy clothes were torn and dull. Their long, bright hair, which used to fly up in the wind and shine in the bright starshine like gold and silver threads with sparkles all tumbling among them, was cut short and untidy and heavy. Its colour was the colour of wet mud. Their shoulders and elbows and knees stuck through great holes and tears in their clothes. Their shoes had no soles, or if they had, they flapped up and down to trip them up ; and, what was most shocking to fairies, the shoes were full of holes, and either had no laces or only odd ones. It was a sad thing to see their shoes always coming off, but sadder to see the little woebegones putting them on again, though they would have been better without. Then these little stolen people were not very clean ; you could see their faces very streaky with the tears they had shed in the brazen castle. There was plenty of water too in Raggaplas. But, as they had forgotten how to be thirsty, they never wanted to wash. If you suggested that a drink of the sweet water that came running down the hills would do them good, they refused, because, they said :

“ We don’t want to cry any more ; we have done our share of that ! ”

The truth is that Raggaplas was a fairy town full of young scarecrows and ragamuffins and woebegones. A certain number of them had made themselves pretty comfortable and did not want to get back to Belmarket. But most of the little people longed to get back, and might have

cried and cried till they discovered their way back, if only they had remembered how to be thirsty.

The Dragon in the castle with the brass walls guarded the Valgrif Country so carefully that it was almost impossible for anyone to get in or out of it without the monster's consent. This was a dreadful thing, you will understand, for the Fairy Queen to put up with. It had been getting worse and worse for many years ; the Dragon was growing hungrier and thirstier and bigger and greener ; the brazen castle had stretched its walls further down its mountain-sides till they almost touched the Valgrif, and the walls became so hot in the starshine that the little people in Raggaplas used to think they burst into flame when the stars all set together at night. By the way, Jack will have it that just as the stars set they all began to sing, and that he could still hear them after it was quite dark. He says this was their song :

- “ Now the starry day is ended  
    Sleepy songs arise,  
Songs that dream of broke things mended,  
    And dry the children’s eyes.
- “ Play and work in night are sleeping  
    Till dreams away have flown ;  
Girls and boys to lands go creeping  
    Where the songs are grown.
- “ Boys and girls ! the stars keep singing,  
    Singing while you sleep !  
Though bells in belfries cease their ringing,  
    And bells on woolly sheep.
- “ When the stars again come shining  
    Each with radiant crown,  
Work and play their hands entwining  
    Fill all the fairy town ”

At last the Queen knew something quite unusual must be done to put an end to the terror. Yet difficulties beset her. Thus her Field-Marshal, Brigadier-General Leprecaun—the only one of her officers who knew that part of the kingdom well enough to be relied upon to set things right—had been kept busier than ever in his life before, controlling the starry waters, so that he could not himself champion the lost fairy maidens of Belmarket. Somehow, salt had got into the tarns and lakes ; and sometimes even the rivers were just a bit brackish—a most terrible thing. This, they supposed, was due to the pool of tears in the castle leaking away under the brass walls and reaching deep springs. Not only was this great general busy enough with these important matters, but more shoes were needed than ever before, because such a lot of good children in Thickland—as fairies call our world—wanted to get into Fairyland.

The Brigadier-General well knew how much he was needed and was longing to challenge the Dragon to mortal combat, though he fully realized the awful dangers. But, as I say, he had such important affairs on hand that, if he neglected them for a single day, more harm might come than ever the Dragon did. So one day, five or more years before the Twins set out upon their journey, he had sought an audience of his Queen. Because she loved and trusted him, she would never keep him waiting more than two minutes, however many hundreds of miles away she might be at the moment.

“ Dear Majesty,” he said on bended knee, “ very fine will it be to say that time and tide wait for everyone in Fairyland, but thy humble servant can’t wait for *them* at all, at all. The Dragon makes his own time—and a fine time it is ! —out of fairy tears ; and his slimy tail grows apace and

waxes so bold that it is now curled outside his brass walls in horrid affront to thy laws. What will I be doing but set me friend Captain Lord Curdie to watch him till the little knight from the Steddlecoomb Farm is old enough ? ”

“ General,” the Queen had answered, putting her hands upon his loyal shoulders, “ you are right. We must have our own people to do our people’s work. If you and I did everything for them their hearts would grow weak, and their tears lose their saltiness. The time is come for the story to begin. It is our royal will and pleasure to send our well-beloved friend Lord High Admiral Scarecrow to win the Twins’ love and confidence. His Flagship somehow always finds its harbour, even if its sails be blown to ribbons and his uniform torn to tatters by the fiercest storms. The work before him will need the finest seamanship, for he must himself ride at anchor in a kitchen garden, the sport of winds and weathers. But my god-children the Twins shall see that he does not suffer, and my little birds shall *not* be scared away from their rights in grubs and seeds and tender fruits. He knows our will and all the starry harbours of our Fairy Coast.

“ Then there is my Lord Curdie. He is the best of all our doggie people and he shall guard our loving fairies till our little knight and our little spinner are old enough for doughty deeds. But that, I fear me, will keep the loving sheep-dog from his home and grieve his gentle heart.”

“ Nay, dear Majesty,” the General explained, “ with my Lord Curdie, duty and deliverance are the joy of life. He will wait. For him a tail is an infamy, and the Dragon’s caudal extremity a contumacious menace to thy people. Great Queen, I rejoice in thy consent.”

So he bowed himself out of the Queen’s Court among the

bluebells, beneath the young-leaved beeches. That was the reason why Curdie stayed away so long from home.

But a little more explaining is yet to be done. The fairy folk living in Belmarket could not understand the green Dragon and its ways. You can never understand anything that lives in a brass castle—still less if its only drink is briny tears ! In spite of the Dragon's terrible head and tail, one or other of which, when they looked for it, could generally be seen hanging over or round the yellow, gleaming walls, many of the little fairies used to feel sorry for the creature's loneliness. Some very sentimental ones thought that if it would but come and live near them—*outside* the town, please !—it would love them and would not be so lonely, and would drink sweet water and would get a change of heart. But not even these really wished their generous thoughts to take effect just yet ! They knew that actually the scaly monster did come prowling about pretty often : they knew it because of the disappearances of people's little sisters, and because of the many ragged, scarecrow fairies they were told of who lived in Raggaplas.

But I may as well tell you at once what the little people in Belmarket did not know, although it was only at the last that I found it out. The Dragon, though it caused such terrible misery in the land and was quite as bad and fierce a Dragon as you will find in all history, had perhaps a little white spot in its black heart. Jill at least thought so. At any rate, something, they say, made it want very much to be good and live happily ever after. It thought the only way was to get a pair of fairy shoes, and then it would be welcomed into Belmarket and the folk would make it Governor and would gladly give it all the salt tears to drink it needed. It was a stupid Dragon, and the white spot

in its heart—if it had one—must have been changing to grey. Hence, having only such a tiny bit of tenderness in its hard heart, it could not understand what sort of thing happiness is, and what sort of things people love to do who wear fairy shoes. So very stupid was it that it could not see it was impossible for its six webby, three-clawed feet to pack into fairy shoes made only for good children.

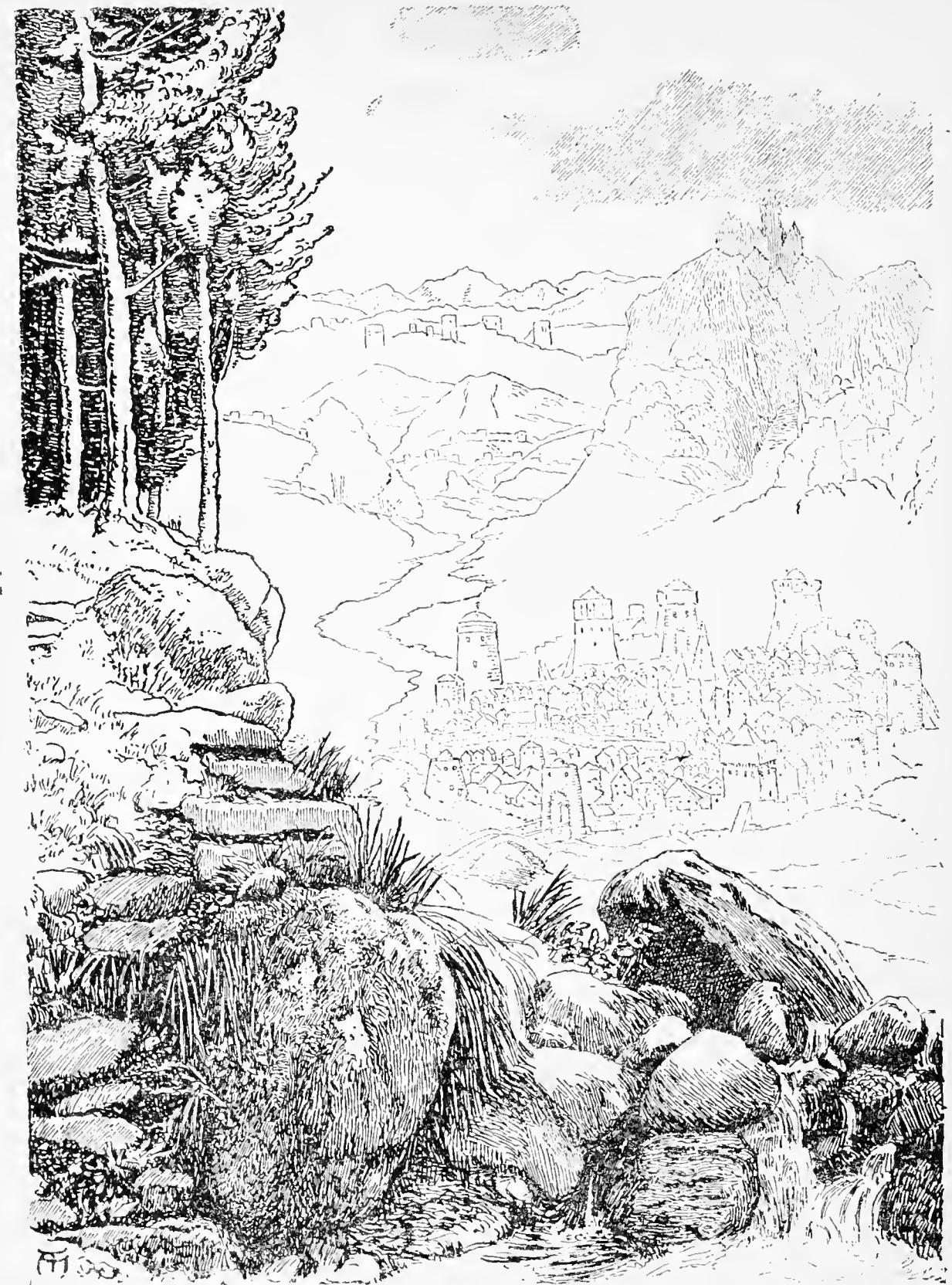
Yet it was not only for the sake of their shoes that it captured little maidens out of Belmarket. It wanted tears, you understand, runny and hot and salt, to keep its pool full. As soon as it caught a fresh fairy and carried her home to its castle, it tried to take the little shoes off with its black, curly tongue. But the moment the tongue touched the shoes they vanished. Then the Dragon got excited and greener, and its scales rattled all over it like a cartload of oyster-shells being thrown down a steep place. It seemed to think that the captured fairy had hidden her shoes away in some secret pocket. So it would tear the pretty clothes all to tatters, bite the hair off close with its sharp and bitter teeth, and lastly would rub wet mud into the little head and leave the poor captive to chew horse-radish and weep tears of salt into its pool.

Never yet had the Dragon succeeded in capturing one pair of fairy shoes. As time went on it desired the shoes less and the tears more. Time went by him and became the past ; and to Dragons the past means one thing only—a longer and longer and ever longer and more inconveniently scaly tail. More time also came to it out of the future ; and, as with all other Dragons, the more the coming time became the present time the longer and blacker and curlier grew its thirsty tongue. Never yet had it shed one real tear in

## The Dragon with the Long Tail 69

sorrow for its sins, though it would often sentimentally squeeze drops of something that looked like tears out of its crocodile eyes.

Having explained all this, we can now go back to the Twins whom we left so happy in their new fairy shoes on the star's hill-side.



BELMARKET

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE FAIRY TOWN OF BELMARKET

THE Twins, of course, did not know why they were come on this journey, though they wondered if it was to find Curdie and take him home. Such little children take everything that comes jolly as if it were quite an every-day thing ; and everything that comes sad as something to be got through without any fuss—unless, indeed, the sad thing is caused by naughtiness of their own, when of course something *has* to be done. They have an impression that up till now they were, for the most part, making up their adventures, in spite of Mr. Scarecrow's leadership. Now, however, they began to be puzzled as to what was *pretend* and what real. Yet it soon became clear that the happenings were no longer a game, and that they were actually needed in Fairyland. It would perhaps have spoiled their usefulness if they had been told beforehand what was expected of them. I think the Queen needed them for what was to come just because of their loving little hearts and their braveness. All the same—and they both say I am to tell it all, though at first they wanted it left out and the story unwritten—it was because of one tiny morsel of naughtiness in their little souls that things nearly went hopelessly wrong. So much had depended upon their keeping hold of one another's hands !

We saw them last, you will remember, on the hill-side looking after their old shoes scampering home.

When Jack and Jill turned round again, there lay the Scarecrow on the grass, leaning over the running brook, scooping it up with his hands and pouring it on his head. The children politely sat down to watch the interesting business. He had taken off his ragged green tail-coat with the brass buttons and now sat up in his torn shirt-sleeves. All his things were washed clean, and somehow looked so different that Jill said to Jack :

“ I don’t think we ought to mend any more for him.”

“ Then let’s don’t ! ” he answered. “ P’raps rags is nice in Fairyland. Let’s ask. Mr. Crow, please——” he began. But then he stopped short ; for their friend looked up at them with such a lovely look upon his face, that they knew he was somebody rather different, but yet just the same as ever. Why they had ever thought his face a funny one they could *not* understand !

Certainly it was a very, very kind face now. His eyes were still very black, but neither they nor anything else about him now looked made-up. He was quite real now, and when his eyes twinkled and he smiled you could see he was the same dear old joker.

“ Jack and Jillie,” he said to them, as he tore off a bit of shirt-sleeve and began unfolding it till it was a lovely soft towel to dry his face and arms and hands with, “ you see it is more useful being a scarecrow than you’d think. But you mustn’t try that trick on your own sleeves ! First have a good wash in this brook, while Nanny and I get breakfast.”

So he went into a little shady beech wood carpeted with many bygone years’ brown leaves—old fairy clothes he called them—and somehow made a lovely breakfast : tiny

little loaves there were, and apples, like Smiling Mary's, and big blackberries, and Nanny's milk. The children had been ever so quick over their washing. The sweet wind from the mountain's star dried their hands and faces quickly, and they came running into the wood, Streaky after them. They left the five pigeons splashing about and drinking.

Breakfast over, the Scarecrow told them to listen very carefully to all he had to say. While he spoke, it seemed as though his words all joined in with the singing of a waterfall at the other end of the wood.

"Dear Twins," he said, "you have both been so good and kind to an old ragged joker of a scarecrow, mending him and propping him up and wishing him happy returns and giving him things, and—it's his turn now to be kind."

"You've been kinder nor us," interrupted honest little Jack, thinking it had all been play for them ; "we *thought* it was all pretend."

"Jack," whispered Jill to him, "we didn't think it quite all pretend, I don't think ; 'cos we *was* frightened when he spoke—just a weenie bit !"

"I wonder !" said the Scarecrow, as if he had heard their doubts. "Anyhow, I have to go a long way over the hills—too far for your little legs. But you don't need me any more yet awhile. Come with me, all of you, to the other end of the wood and you'll see where to go."

They went up further and soon were looking down upon a very high waterfall tumbling down into a lovely valley. As it fell it broke again and again into shooting fountains and spray mixed up with chips and spangles of rainbow starshine. Then the scattered water would gather together and slide down the drenched rocks in little runnels, or tumble into a dark cove watched by silver birches and wet

ferns ; then out again it came into the light, and away, away for another precipitous slither and scamper, toss-up and tumble. But far down below them the Twins saw how the water's play was over, because it ran into a gentle winding river, with wooded hills and corn-lands all about. They saw it divide into two as it sped round the zigzag, up-and-down-hill walls of a tiny fairy town. The walls were greeny-grey, with red-tiled turrets upon them ; and bigger round towers here and there, guarding old wooden gates, black with age, but with great silver hinges spreading like vine branches over them and making them strong. They saw right over and into the little town. It was full of old, high-gabled houses with red roofs and casement windows. The streets were so narrow that the people could shake hands out of the top windows with their neighbours across the street ; and sometimes, just for fun, they could even reach their heads far enough out to kiss a good morning. There were lots of little gardens too, and every garden had in it a fountain of black twisty iron with a silver vine growing up it ; and the water would shoot up high or gently bubble over the glittering vines. There was a market too, all paved with pearly flagstones and cobbles. The stalls were canopied in the gayest colours ; and fairy market-women, with big poke-bonnets and laughing old faces inside and bunchy blue frocks, sat under their red umbrellas selling grapes and loaves of bread ; and gilt gingerbread dragons ; and sugar-sticks looking like magic water. Then there were little two-wheeled carts, drawn by white donkeys going bumpety-bump, clinkety-clank, over the cobble-stones, and the donkeys, each with its own coal-black cross on its back, were shod with silver shoes, while silver bells hung from their high-pointing hames. The donkeys' drivers were

tiny men with short legs, big heads, and beards down to their knees. All these things the Twins could see from the great distance away where they stood ; for in Starland the atmosphere is magic-clear, and after the face and eyes have been washed in star water, all good things can be clearly seen however far away. They could hear, too, all sorts of working sounds—the music that fairy-work always makes. The little sounds were ringing sweet—like smiths' hammers on red-hot silver and iron and copper and gold.

“ What are they making, Mr. Crow ? ” asked Jack.

“ Armour,” said the Scarecrow.

“ What’s the armour for ? ” asked the boy.

“ To arm the champion that will kill the Dragon or die gloriously,” answered their friend very seriously.

“ A Dragon ! ” the Twins exclaimed together, as if horror-struck.

“ A monstrous beast,” explained Mr. Crow, “ that steals maiden fairies and little girls to get their shoes.”

“ Oh, I wish, I wish ”—said Jack, suddenly going very red, while his eyes opened wide—“ I wish I wasn’t such a little boy ! ”

“ Where is the Dragon and how big is it ? ” asked Jill, standing on tiptoe to see further, as if taking up Jack’s wish and considering it.

“ Look straight down the valley beyond the walls of the town, beyond where the river disappears. What do you see, children ? ”

“ There’s another mountain under that black cloud ; and it’s all dim rocks,” said Jack, looking intently beyond ; “ and it’s terrible steep.”

“ I see some zigzag, yellow walls up and down over the rocks ; but it’s all foggy, and my eyes won’t go,” said Jill.

"Oh, but I say!" said Jack, "there's a long green thing lying on the side of the mountain, and it comes to a point; and I think it's breathing"—Jack was now looking with outstretched neck—"but now it's got all foggy again."

"Oh, Jack, look!" exclaimed Jill, "it's the dragon's tail! and there's yellow smoke, two curly streams of it, coming out of two holes at the thick end of it."

"Them's its nostrils!" said Jack, "I do believe."

"Come away, now, children—back into the wood for Nanny and Streaky. You have a long way to go yet—and you must go without me."

"Which way, please?" asked Jill.

"The way you will find, children," was the reply.

"S'pose," said Jack, "we found a wrong one."

"Nobody," replied their kind and shiny-ragged guide—"nobody ever finds a wrong way in Fairyland unless they quarrel; and then they're half out of Fairyland—and——"

Jonas had once said to me, "They Twins—they Twins ain't got a little half-ounce o' quarrel in 'em—not if they busted up—not they!" We all used to think he was, as usual, almost quite right; but——! They were just like the two halves of one person. Yet they are as different in character as any other two of us, Mother says.

Then a very surprising thing happened. Mr. S. Crow actually lifted up, first Jillie, then Jack, into his arms and kissed them, "just like Father and Kit!" they said afterwards. Then he set them down.

"Don't forget, little ones," he said, "to write home. Don't forget the old Hawthorn Tree. The lunantishee will always have one of Kit's pigeons there waiting to carry loving letters—Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, or Fanny. And don't lose any of your luggage. And——"

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"I shan't want my work-box any more, I don't think," said Jill, with a sigh.

"Oh, but you may, my child," said their friend, "and your spindle, too : *and* the stitchwort. Take good care of everything. Jack *may* find he needs his sword more than anything—till he gets a realer one ! He may get torn into rags, and then you will want all your things to mend *him* up."

Nor did the Scarecrow say these words as though they were *pretend*. Yet the children may have thought they were part of the game.

"Now I must be off to my own children !" he said, and turned to go, but stopped for one word more.

"If ever you find two roads, one up and one down and don't know which to take, go up always. If you find a tall quickset hedge in the way, don't go round it—mind, never, never—go straight over it. And if you meet a witch on the way down to the valley, believe only half of what she tells you ; and that's all—and——"

And he was gone.

Jack called after him :

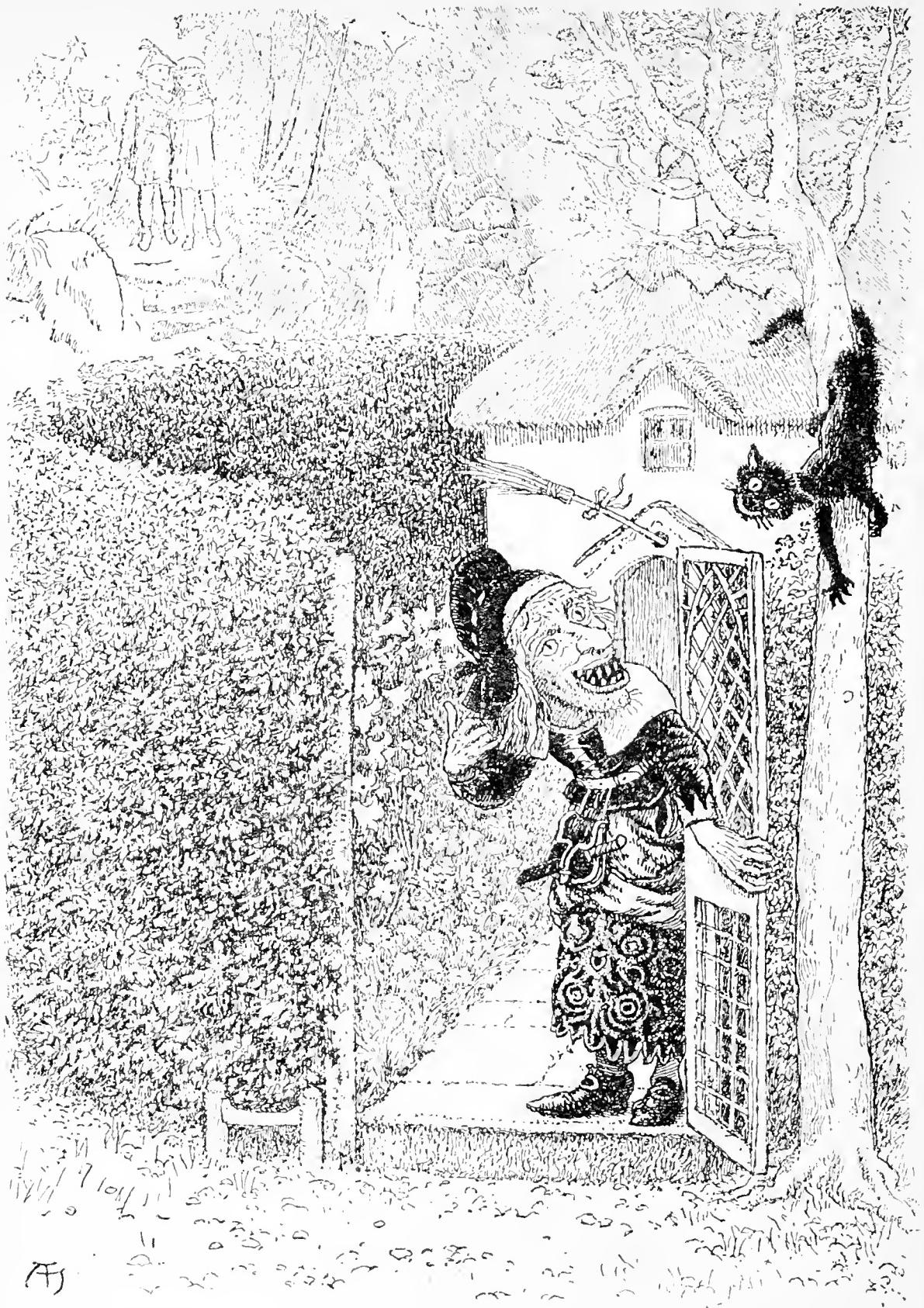
"Which half, Mr. Crow, please, which half ? "

But he was running away fast uphill and not towards the Fairy Town.

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Fanny flew away after him.

"Mr. Crow ! Mr. Crow ! please come back ! I want to ask you something ! Mr. Crow ! "

But they felt their words would not go after him. He did not hear and was, in one minute more, out of sight.



THE WITCH AND BLACK PUSS

## CHAPTER IX

### THE WITCH

THE next morning at home I found the third letter lying in the now leafless branch of Smiling Mary that comes through the tent. The twins wrote it just after the Scarecrow left them, and found they had, without knowing it, been sitting against the old Hawthorn Tree. This is what we all read at breakfast-time :—

“ My darling Mother and All of us,

“ Please, we are quite well but sad becos Mr. Crow has gone. Everything's stopped pretend now. Our luggage is all safe and so is Nanny and the rest. We are off now to the Fairy Town and there's a dragon. We seed him on the rocks snorking smoke. There's a witch to come too praps, what we mustnt berleve half of. But witch harf, Mr. Crow didn't tell. And O Mother we've got new shoes such luvly ones. It was a little fairy young man, called General Something-corn, made them for us. Have you seen the old ones they ran home like mice.

“ Love and lots of x x x x x x x x x x x x

“ Hopping to see you at brekfast as it leaves me the same,

“ I remain,

“ Your two lovingest twins,

“ JILLIE.

“ JACK.”

There had been much discussion between them as to the last sentence. Jill had done all the writing this time, and for some reason did not offer the envelope to Jack for his share of licking. He looked on rather ruefully at Jill's enjoyment of the gum's queer taste, and then thoughtfully remarked :

"I don't believe that last after the kisses *was* sensible."

"It was, I know it was, because I *thought* it," asseverated Jill rather sharply. "Besides," she added on tiptoe, as she put the letter into the hole in the hawthorn, "nobody understands everything, Mother says. Now we've got to hold hands and repeat!"

They took a may-blossom out of the work-box, held it between their clasped hands, and said in sing-song voices :

"Fairy bird, please, in the name of the Queen,  
Carry our letter safe under your wing ;  
Fly to the Farm on the land down below—  
You shall have blessings wherever you go!"

Then they sat down to watch for the pigeon.

"You might have let me do my lick," Jack said rather grumpily.

"Boys lick too hard, and then if it won't stick down safe the postman isn't allowed to carry it to the *right* address."

"Silly!" said Jack.

"I'm not; and I'm older than you," said Jill.

"Silly again," repeated Jack.

Then they let go their hands, and forgot about the letter and the pigeon. Jill began to cry. Jack turned very red, drew his sword, presented arms to the Universe, and

marched on ahead through the beech wood. He would walk a few yards quickly ahead, then stop and turn his eyes just enough to see that Jill was not far behind, would almost let her reach him, and then strut on again, quick march !

Jill caught up with him at the waterfall.

"Jack, Jack, I didn't *mean* to!" she pleaded. But he, his pride not yet having overcome the unjust accusation against boys in general and therefore himself in particular, started running down the grassy hill, within reach of the waterfall's gallop and drenching spray. Soon they found they were on a steep, stony path, and Jack, unable, I suppose, to go slower, stumbled over a big, wet stone right on to his forehead, making a deep cut, and knocking him quite unconscious for a few minutes. Jill then soon caught him up, but first had her own tumble and roll. She stopped crying when she saw the big wound in Jack's head. She opened her work-box, found a fine piece of starry stitchwort with its needle attached. She put it on his forehead. It made sparks and needle lightnings, and in two minutes had mended the broken crown so safely that Jack was quite well again.

"Jack," she said, "it's not pretend any more, but a real story what's never been told to the end. Only think! P'raps we've got to be a *true* story!"

"It all began in pretend," said Jack, still smarting, partly for his own unkindness and partly for his wounded pride, and still lying on his back.

"We *thought* it was pretend," gently explained Jill, "and we *thought* he was only a Scarecrow. But he's gone now; and oh, I wish, I *wish* Trystie would come and find us. Let's kiss and be friends!"

"Let's!" said Jack; and they did.

Mother and I think that those two kissing each other is a pretty sight.

Then Jack said he was quite well again. So they walked quietly down that loose, stony path, zigzag by the waterfall. Nanny and Streaky came trotting behind them: they were always behind, because they always wanted to stop and nibble. Presently the four came to a little house almost hidden in a tall quickset hedge. Through the hedge they got peeps of the loveliest garden, all roses and tall lilies-of-the-valley. The chimney was smoking, and somehow the scent of the blue wood-smoke made them feel very hungry for their own dinner. So they went round and round the hedge to find a way in. But every time they got round, the place looked different; the smoke smelt less and less sweet and the garden looked less pretty.

"It smells like bones and weeds and egg-shells burning now," said Jill.

"The lilies is all turning green and the roses blue," said Jack.

"And the leaves is withering up paler and paler!" exclaimed Jill in indignation. Then she turned her head away. "Let's run away!" she exclaimed.

"Let's," said Jack.

But at that moment they found themselves peering through a tall lattice gate, and they saw an old lady coming down the path towards them, looking very kind, but ugly. When she smiled she showed very white and shiny, but very pointed teeth. "Dinner's ready," she said; "come in and eat it, little darlings!"

"Thank you, ma'am," said the Twins together, "but we're just a little bit afraid of you. Our Nanny goat and

pet lamb have gone on down the path and we might lose them ! ”

“ My big black cat has gone to fetch them back, little darlings ! Don’t you be afraid of an old granny who loves you.” She whined and she smiled and she smirked as she gently led and pushed them into her cottage door. As she softly shut it behind them, she added with a grating laugh, “ And I never eat twins—oh, never, never, never ! ”

“ Please, ma’am,” asked Jill—they were both now quite pale with fear—“ which half mustn’t we believe ? ”

“ Ah, which, indeed, when it’s all true,” she replied, looking terribly fierce. Then she spoke in a wheedling way again. “ My brother is Mr. Scarecrow of Hither Garden. My name is kind Mrs. Scaremonger. He’s a joker, and my best particular friend : Mr. Jonas told you so. When my brother tells you to believe only one half—he means you mustn’t believe the half I never tell *good* children till their bones are picked white and clean ! He-haw ! he-haw ! he-haw ! ” that was the way she laughed, like a kicking donkey. Then she grinned again and ground her sharp, pointed teeth.

She made them sit down at the table, and said if they wanted to get home they could eat their way out of her cottage. Then she scolded them :

“ You quarrelled, you wicked children ! The Queen says I must fatten you and eat you as a punishment ! I’ll teach you to quarrel ! And she says if you run away the Dragon will tear you to tatters, unless you give him your shoes.”

“ But, please, ma’am,” said Jack very boldly, “ we kissed and made it up again.”

“ That makes it worse,” the old witch said. “ To make

a thing up is to tell stories ! This is what the Queen said to me :

“ ‘ Kind Mrs. Scaremonger,  
Think of poor Black Puss’s hunger ;  
Let her pick their twinny bones  
Dry as shells or cherry stones !  
Naughty children, hand-in-hand,  
Nobody wants in Fairyland.’

“ That’s what the Queen says, says she ! ”

Then she left them and very softly shut the door behind her, as if afraid somebody might hear.

They looked round, but no door could be seen anywhere, and only the tiniest windows too high up to reach. The walls were all built of plum-cake bricks and ginger-bread beams and cold potatoes—which, at home, the Twins loved beyond all things, when allowed, for a great treat, to eat them in their fingers ! On the floor round the walls were set flower-pots with raspberry jam for mould and crystallized fruits growing on sugar-sticks for plants. The children were so hungry, and were going to begin on the fruit when they heard the witch’s voice outside and the cat’s too :

“ Black Puss, Black Puss, will the oven take ‘em ? ”

“ Yea, Mistress Ogre, and bake ‘em, bake ‘em ! ”

“ Black Puss, Black Puss, what if they get fatter ? ”

“ Roll ‘em out and beat ‘em thin, flatter, flatter ! ”

“ Black Puss, Black Puss, have you caught the Nanny ? ”

“ Yea, and I’ve milked her, in a canny, canny.”

“ Black Puss, Black Puss, have you caught the lambie ? ”

“ Yea, she’s safe in my inside, crammy, crammy ! ”

“ O ! poor little goaty Nan,  
How she from black pussy ran !  
O ! poor little bleating lamb—  
Was there ever tighter cram ? ”



WELCOME

Jill then began to cry for their pets' sad fate ; but Jack couldn't cry : he was too angry.

"That's all pretend, I know," he said. "That poetry is the half what Mr. Crow said we mustn't believe."

So Jill was comforted. Presently Jack said :

"Let's get fat, Jillie, on the cake, and then the oven won't do."

"Let's taste first," said the more cautious Jill.

So Jack drew his sword and cut a bit of plum-cake out of the wall. But the cake and ginger-bread and sweet-stuff had been made by the stingy old witch without any sugar, but with heaps of salt instead. Jack ate a bit, then Jill. Then both felt very sick. Next Black Puss started miouing horribly outside. Then the twins began to be afraid again for Nanny and Streaky. They took hands and wept pitifully. Soon they heard a short, sharp bark.

"*That* wasn't Black Puss," said Jill, suddenly stopping her crying.

They looked up. There in the wall where they had tasted the cake was now a broken hole. Into it was poked the shining grey head of a big sheep-dog, with brown, starry eyes. He barked again and again, short and sharp, but so gently that they found they could understand every word he said :

"I'm Curdie. The loving Queen has sent me to keep you safe, Missie Jill and Master Jack, till your fairy work and play are done, and you get back home again. I've bitten off one of the black cat's nine lives, and she's a little dead now. And, do you know ? *I have chased the witch into her own oven.* It's a pity it isn't hot enough to cook her ! Nanny and Streaky are safe waiting for you by the Hawthorn Tree. Miss Luke has got your letter and is flying home as

fast as she can. Nanny's just getting a lovely tea for you."

The children clapped their hands and lovingly kissed the old dog, whom they seemed to know so well, though they did not remember ever having seen him before.

"How shall we get out?" asked Jack.

He tried to cut the hole bigger with his sword, but the cake was now as dry and hard as stone and took the edge off the blade.

"I don't think we can *eat* any more," said Jill.

"No, and you mustn't try," said Curdie. Then he went to sleep for one minute to think. "I know," he went on, waking up suddenly, "write another letter home and post it."

So they took out their things and wrote. Curdie took his head out of the hole, and then the bright sunshine looked in and made the cottage as bright as day. They sat down on sugar stools by the table which was made of toffee, and each wrote a letter.



## CHAPTER X

### SHOEING THE GOAT AND BELLING THE LAMB

If any people besides ourselves ever read this story, I want them to be quite clear about certain things that are puzzling when you try to explain them, but simple enough when you don't. Anything we can measure or weigh or count, like time and oil-cake and money, is different in Fairyland ; but the things you can't measure or weigh or count, like love and trust and hope and beautifulness, are just the same as here. Fairy time and distance look funny if you try and measure them ; but if you only remember that though two people may be holding hands, one may be in Fairyland and one in Thickland, then such things are more lovely than funny. Some days after these adventures were all over I asked the Twins how it was that time and weight and distance were all so different in Fairyland. Jill said that Mr. S. Crow had explained to them that on the Fairy Downs all time is wild thyme. Then Jack added :

“ And the scales we weigh things with in the barn, Curdie says, is dragon's scales, 'cos they're always in the way. And, he says, the way to weigh is the Milky Way.”

“ But,” I said, chiefly to tempt more wise nonsense from the children, “ I wish I knew how high the Dragon's crying tower was and how tight he squeezed the little fairies.”

Then Jack remembered one of the Scarecrow's nursery rhymes :

“ Highty-Tighty sat on a wall,  
 His dinner had swelled him as smooth as a ball :  
     Stuck up so high  
     His buttons went fly—  
 He was so highty-tighty he hardly could crawl.

“ Highty-Tighty ! What a big squall !  
 He's flattened, untightened ! my stars ! what a fall ;  
     Splashed on the stones,  
     He spreads out and moans—  
 For now Highty-Tighty is nothing at all !

“ Nor witch with her broomstick, nor champion hen,  
 Can lay him or set him up safely again ;  
     But a bird, fairies tell,  
     Made escape from her shell,  
 And flew away high above castle and vane.”

So the ridiculous rhyme had to do for an answer to my question. The Twins ran away then, seeming to think that many questions may be left to answer themselves.

But I am afraid this does not explain how the Twins found time to write their long letters, nor how we got one after another so quickly. Anyway, it is quite certain that the Twins wrote these two letters and that we got them :—

“ My darling Father,

“ This pictur is Curdie's head poking thru the cake wall. We et sum and it made us feel so sik. Curdie wasnt but then he didn't. Praps hed had anuf of black puss. He says he bit off one of her nine pins. The witch said she'd bake us but Curdie has shut her in. The oven, I mean. She tride to be kind but couldn't. She smiled a lot of sharp teath and looked hungry. We found out witch half Mr.

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Crow said we was to unberleve. We will tell all to kynd frends at brekfast. witch I'm terribl hungry.

“I am luving JACK x x x x x.”

“CAKE COTTAGE,  
STAR HILL, FAIRYLAND.

“My sweetest Mother,

“O, I wish, I wish, I don’t quite know what I wish. I wish sumthing, that’s all I know. I wish you was at home with we two—that’s sumthing I wish. Mother do you know, we’ve found Curdie. We think he is coming with us all the way home, and there’s no more pretend now. The witch’s cottage was real cake but salt and cold tatics and the cake made Jack turn green and me queer and both of us was nearly you know what isn’t perlite to say even when you can’t help being. And there was only the floor. So we didn’t be. Jack’s woodn sword really sliced up the cake—so its real knifey now. Mother, its all a real story we are in and *so* exciting. Curdie is waiting for us by our magic hawthorn tree Prince Lanty, you know, outside this cottage which we are inside. O Mother I am homesick for thee. Please send kind reply and post it in the hawthorn’s hole which praps we can send to fetch it. Or go.

“O Mother us twins had a dredful quarel. We both began it first becos I didn’t give Jack his share of lick,—the envelop I mean and I told him a story only a *pretend* story if he licked too hard it would go to the wrong address. That makes we wish and wish so that I don’t know what I wish. Jack is going to dror the witch here and Black Puss tho we only heard her because I want him to see what I have rote about we quareleng.

“I am your loving, LOVING, LOVING little twin,

“JILLIE.

"P.S.—We made it all up again—the quarrel I mean. The witch said make up *anything* is telling stories. Is it, please.

"P.S.—We think we shall be home to breakfast, but don't wait. Its starland here and nobody knows the time, I don't think. We asked Mr. Crow the time and he said it was all wild time on the Downs."

Then they unpacked a hawthorn blossom, held it between their joined hands, closed their eyes, and repeated the magic rhyme. When they opened their eyes again they were outside the quickset hedge and standing by their old play friend the Hawthorn. Curdie was there too, standing up on his hind-legs and peering into the deep hole, looking as though he was having a conversation with a friend. Then, hearing the children, he dropped on to all fours, but only to sit up begging in front of them. Like a wise child, Jack, who was holding the letter, gave it to Curdie, who took it in his mouth and popped it into the hawthorn hole. Almost instantly John, the white pigeon, flew out with the letter tied under her wing—and away and away she flew.

Now the Twins felt quite happy. They were immediately friends with Curdie, who told them many little things and asked many questions about us all. They could hardly believe that he had known Kit when he was a little boy and me when I was a tearful little waif without a home. They loved to hear his barking talk, though they said his conversation was quite different from Mr. Crow's. He couldn't make long poetry, only short and pointed.

As soon as Curdie began to talk about home, Jill remembered that she had done no spinning that day. Mother had always been very particular that her girls should do a

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certain amount of spinning every day—either with the spindle or the wheel. I am sure all girls ought—if not boys too!—because it is such a help when things go wrong and so happy and friendly when they go right. When Davie once was telling the three little ones about the field-mouse who lived in the Scarecrow's left shoe and had so many children she didn't know what she *could* do, Honeypot offered to settle her difficulties by teaching all the family to spin, if only Davie would make a spinning-wheel small enough. From which you will see that we all regarded it as a happy and consoling occupation that never interfered with other duties. Jill was only just beginning to be handy with her spindle and had hardly yet learned to carry the distaff. Just now they found a great deal of very white lambs' wool hanging to the brambles and blackthorns—so fine and soft that it needed no carding; and presently, as they started again on their journey down into the valley, the path having left the neighbourhood of the waterfall, they came among flocks of the tiniest lambs ever seen, with long tails and so shy and frisky that it was impossible to get near them. But they could see that every one of them had a silver bell tied with blue or red or green ribbon round its neck. "The music," says Jill, "was as sweet but singinger and tinklier and much more tinyer than Jonas's bells!" Our own flocks, I must tell you, are renowned all over the county for their bells. Well, Jack set to work and gathered such a lot of wool that he had to make a little bale of it tied up with Old-man's-beard. Its hanging white tresses got mixed up with the wool so that Jill had to spin it in. Curdie offered to carry the little bale, and Jack tied it on to his back and made a pack-horse of him. Curdie, always as ready for a game as any puppy, pretended to be a horse, proudly held

up his head and threw out his paws like the Squire's high-stepping cob. And he did better—he tried his hand at a nursery rhyme :

“ Ride a dog-horse  
To Belmarket Cross  
To see them make bells for the baa-lambs to toss ;  
And ribbons to tie them in wide-spreading bows—  
Each lamb must make music wherever she goes ! ”

In this happy knitting together of work and play the three gaily reached the valley, Nanny and Streaky, of course, following after. Soon they came to the river where it ran round the old walls of the fairy town. They crossed over by a very steep, almost pointed bridge which led straight to the main gate. The walls, though so strong and old, were very pretty to behold, because, wherever there was a wide gap between the pearly stones, gay flowers were growing, particularly valerian and yellow toad-flax and wall-flower and stonecrop.—Jill says you could see that as fast as the fairy masons pointed the walls in one place to keep them sound, they scraped out the mortar in another to give the flowers new homes among the old stones! Under the bridge the clear river slowly and shiningly flowed, full of fish in all sizes, silver and gold, and green and red. As the Twins went over the little bridge very carefully—because, though of such strong proportions, it looked too small to bear them—they looked into the water and saw that every fish popped its head out and chirped, “ Good morning, little dears ! ” quite plainly though in ever such minute whispers. It all seemed very friendly—not to say entertaining! The great gate—almost toy-like it looked to the Twins—was of heavy wood, black with age,

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and hung by silver hinges spreading all over the doors like vine leaves and grapes.

There were several bell-ropes hanging at the side, and a whole octave of horns to blow. These different ways of getting the door answered had been thoughtfully devised, so that everyone coming could choose his favourite bell-tone or bugle-note. Sometimes, if several arrived together, they would ring the chord or little tune that was the particular right of their own family or guild or craft. Just now, however, Curdie rang no bell, giving only the short, sharp bark he always uses at home when he wants a door opened. Instantly six big heads with long white beards and twelve arms appeared hanging on to the tops of the gates and looking over. "Right, my lord!" they exclaimed together. Then the gates were thrown open by six little men with very short legs and long arms, and so quickly that some of those looking over the top tumbled off. Jack knew them for Trolls directly and so felt quite at home, especially when they all started playing leapfrog and then stood in a row with joined hands across the entrance.

"Welcome, welcome," they all said in one voice; "but no one enters here without fairy shoes."

"We've got them on!" exclaimed Jack and Jill together.

"But you are four times and a half time too big for Belmarket as long as Miss Nanny and Master Streaky have no fairy shoes. Is it not so, my lord?" This question was to Curdie.

"Oh, yes, my Trolls, right ye be," replied our dog. "I had forgotten to bethink me of these grave matters in my masquerade. Hie one of ye to the Cross, and fetch hither the master shoe-smith and the master bell-smith. Say Lord Curdie and his friends have instant need of their presence."

In a very few seconds came the two, long-bearded smiths in leather aprons and caps, and with them four apprentices, dragging along an anvil, a forge, with bellows, tongs and hammers, and bars of silver. In double-quick time the forge was at work and the hammer swinging and the sparks flying, and eight beautiful silver shoes were ready for Nanny,<sup>1</sup> two for each of her cloven hoofs. They fastened them on so quickly and cleverly that she rather liked it, and only once butted one of the apprentices heels over head to show her gratitude. Then the bell-smith made six little bells, knotted them on a leather string, and tied them round Streaky's neck, as her hoofs were too soft for shoes.

As soon as all these things were done, the Twins tell me that nothing looked so absurdly small any longer, because, they suppose, now that Nanny and Streaky were fitted out, everybody was right. But whatever way it had come about, Curdie now seemed to them as big as a Shetland pony and the Troll janitors and smiths about the same size as themselves. Nanny was the same size as she used to be, as compared with themselves, but much smaller than Curdie. Streaky matched the lambs on Starhill-side.

They left the smiths to collect their things and the five travellers entered the fairy town of Belmarket. Everything was just as they had seen it from Starhill ; the narrow streets, the tall houses with overreaching gables, the little squares with gardens full of toy-like trees and gay flowers. The fountains were so pretty that the children had to stop and look at every one they passed. Each had a little statue

<sup>1</sup> In Thickland, of course, silver can't be worked while it is red-hot. All the hammering is done after it has cooled again. It gets hard by hammering, and has to be annealed by heat, and then, when cool again, is soft to the hammer. Even silver and gold, as well as bones and bodies, are different in many ways in Fairyland. Father told me all this.

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in it. One was Red Riding Hood and the wolf ; and an umbrella of water made a canopy over them. Another was Jack and the Beanstalk, and the fountain shot up high out of the growing tip of the Beanstalk. Another was Snow White, lying in her glass coffin with the miners standing round and water bubbling up about their feet. A very beautiful one represented *The Singing Soaring Lark* ; the fountain was for all the world like a crystal cypress tree, with a golden lark perched on the point, flying up and down, round and round, kept up by the water, which made music exactly like the bird's song. At the foot of the tree stood a little girl holding up her hands for the bird she wanted so much. Jack says that although she was only wet marble with a silver frock and gold hair, she was exactly like Jillie. The fountains in their gardens were so many that all the fairy stories ever written and all the nursery rhymes were represented.

Soon they came to the market. Of course there were all kinds of things that were necessary—not only fruit and cakes and little loaves, but what was much more important, all sorts of toy things that children cannot live without : spades and buckets, wheelbarrows, carts, pickaxes, lanterns, baskets, hammers, swords, helmets, toy towns, markets, shops, sheep, dogs and cats and fishes ; bears, of course, and stags and goats, every necessary thing you can think of, except dolls. Bells were hanging and tinkling and clapping everywhere—such a lot of tiny ringing all around that you could hear every tune ever thought of—and all quite distinct—not one note jarring upon another. This seems surprising enough, but it was quite ordinary in Belmarket, where nothing could ever clash, and where nothing would ever have gone wrong—but for the monster green Dragon.

Bells hung from the red umbrellas, from the market trees and fountains—bells of silver and gold, and every sort of crystal : pink, amethyst, cloudy blue, ruby-red, and even green jade.

“ O, such a ring-ting ringing !  
 O, such a silvery singing !  
     Of crystal and gold  
     And treasure untold  
     Tunes from the stars we are bringing !

“ On fountains and trees  
 We hang in the breeze  
 And never a bell-rope to chide us !  
 Our tongues all a-tune,  
 At midnight or noon,  
 Young cherubim sit down beside us !

“ We ring out the times  
 Of old nursery rhymes  
 And dances for May-day all jolly ;  
 And ballad and song  
 That to winter belong  
 And carols like red-berried holly !

“ O, such a ring-ting ringing !  
 O, such a silvery singing !  
     Of crystal and gold  
     And treasure untold,  
     Songs up to the suns we are flinging ! ”

This is the song that the bells always made, when you didn't want to pick out any particular tune of your own.

The Twins stood and watched the old fairy woman sitting under one particularly large red umbrella. She had a dear baby-like face, all smiles ; her bonnet looked like a sidelong bell, and she herself the very soul of gay innocence. By her

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side was a big open book with nothing written in it but nursery rhymes ; and perched on the edge of it was a blue-black raven, keeping his mistress's accounts with his long pointed bill. Jill, as politely as possible, peeped over the bird's wing. The book was ruled like an account-book. On the top of the left-hand column was written in bold letters GOOD and on the right BAD.

The list began with :—

“ GOOD.	BAD.
1 Pocketful of rye .....	6d. Sing-song.
24 Blackbirds .....	1 Pie (baked).”

But the raven had scratched through and through the word “ baked.” Below this in opposite columns Jill saw all these items entered :—

“ 1 Baby Bunting }	.....	{ 1 Father gone hunting.
1 ditto crying }	.....	{ 1 ditto fetching.
1 Rabbit skin .....		1 Baby Bunting in.
1 Baa Black sheep }	.....	{ 1 Yes-sir-plenty.
1 Boy asking }	.....	{ 3 Bags full.
1 Georgie-porgie }	.....	{ 6 girls kissed.
1 Pudding }	.....	{ 4 ditto, ditto.
1 Pie }		{ 10 ditto, crying.
1 King Coal (old) }	.....	{ 1 Pie.
1 Merry Soul (ditto) }	.....	{ 1 Bowl.
1 ditto, ditto, calling }		{ 3 Fiddlers.
1 Hickory Dickory }	.....	{ 1 Mouse running up.
1 Dock }		{ 1 Clock.
1 Clock striking 1 .....		1 Mouse running down.
1 Hickory .....		1 Dickory Dock.”

When Jill had read as far as this and found it most interesting the raven turned the leaf over with one claw. Then Jill saw the next entry was written very large and in red ink :—

“ 1 Jack running }	.....	1 Hill.
1 Jill ditto	}	2 Steep.
2 Fetching .....	.....	1 Pail of water.
2 Fell Out .....	.....	1 Quarrel.
1 Jack falling down .....	.....	1 Broken crown.
1 Jill tumbling after .....	.....	1 Lot of crying over spilled water.”

Jack was now reading the book also.

“ It’s all wrong,” Jill said, her face going rosy red. “ And it’s a shame ! ”

“ How did he know ? ” Jack whispered to Jill. Curdie was now lying down, his nose on his paws and one eye shut.

“ I don’t believe he did,” Jill said to comfort themselves. Curdie got up and stretched himself.

“ Try my smiling apples ! ” said the fairy woman behind the stall.

“ Please, ma’am,” answered Jill, “ we’ve spent all our savings on Jack’s coloured chalks, so we mustn’t.”

“ Money’s no good in Belmarket,” said the apple-fairy, smiling so sweetly that the Twins both felt they must have seen her before. “ Everybody can have all they want for the asking, if they really need them. But perhaps you don’t *need* my apples.”

“ I think we *want* them,” said Jack thoughtfully.

“ Look closer at my apples and you will soon know if they are yours.”

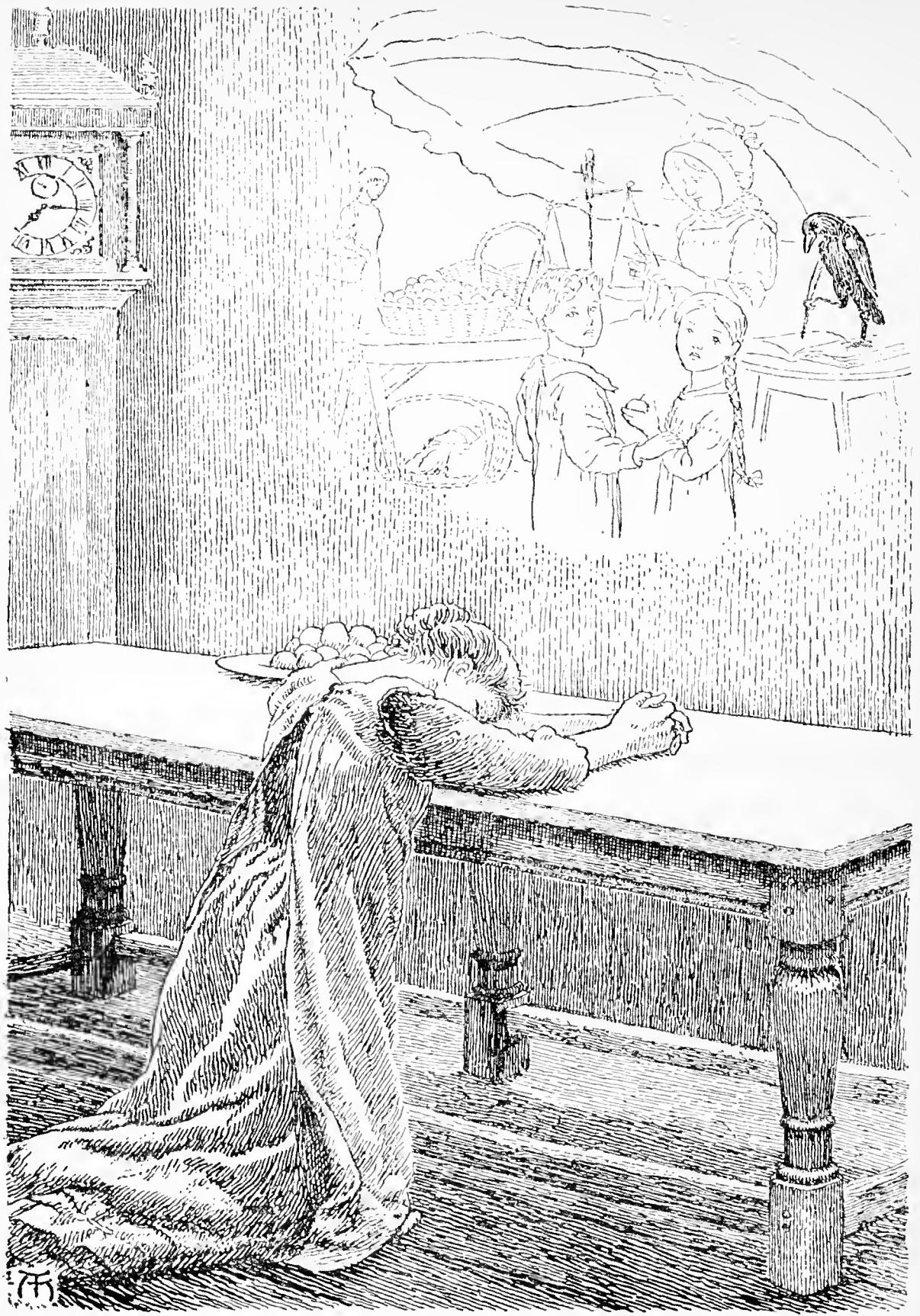
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The children were now standing hand-in-hand by the side of the round table on which the ruddy fruit was piled, their free hands resting on its edge. They felt it very cold, and then saw that the table looked like dull silver with its edge turned up to keep the great heap of apples from rolling off.

"I do believe," said Jack, with big eyes, "they are Smiling Mary's!"

"I do believe they are!" assented Jill, and looked up into the apple-fairy's eyes.

And there for a few minutes we must seem to leave them, though it was not for many seconds that they actually stood there.



HERE AND THERE

## CHAPTER XI

### SMILING MARY IN THE KITCHEN

YOU may wonder how it was that, after the children found themselves adapted to the size of things in the fairy town of Belmarket, they should still feel that everything was so very small and toy-like. The truth seems to be that in Curdie they still had a standard of size belonging to the home-world. Perhaps he remained big because he had no fairy shoes or bells ; though, being half-fairy himself, he had no real need for them. But certainly and whatever the explanation, whenever the Twins walked down a narrow street he took up quite half the roadway. In the market there was no room for him between the stalls ; and, if he wanted to lie down, it could be only in the main walks that ran through the Market like a cross. As a matter of fact, the Twins are always puzzled when we question them as to the size of things in Belmarket, and even more as to the size of Curdie. When out walking with them he was always as big as a pony. At the same time they are no less certain that, when it came to his sitting beside them in the little kitchen of the fairy house they soon came to occupy, he was just as big as he ought to be. But before we go further with them I must tell of certain happenings at home, where Time was travelling at his usual pace.

It was the second morning after the Twins' disappearance that we found Kit's carrier pigeon—Luke, it was—perched

on Smiling Mary's bough that pokes through the tent. It was a sunny and crisp frosty morning, everything sharp and clear. On the same branch where the bird was perched was hanging the scarecrow's disreputable chimney-pot hat, and a pair of starlings were jerkily and most comically wagging their heads at it. Kit took the pigeon and untied the two letters. Then he carried the bird off to feed her, while Father and Mother and I read the letters. We were much surprised at the news, but wondered almost more at the small handwriting, Jack's funny pictures, and the length of the missives.

Mother was already, as Father and I feared, fretting sadly about the two children, although, after Curdie's visit to her and me, she felt sure they must be safe. The point that kept her anxious was the possibility that they had just gone off on some game-escapade ; the letters gave colour to such a possibility. On the other hand, they would never have done this on their own idea : Honeypot would have been the instigator. Moreover, there was Curdie's appearance to be explained, and, even more extraordinary, the Scarecrow's disappearance, and the finding of his hat hanging in the apple tree. There really could be no question about it : the children were away in Fairyland ; and by no possibility could they be brought home except through fairy agency. In a way this made matters worse for Mother, since there could be no use whatever in setting out to seek them. Of course, I was able to comfort Mother in some measure, because, somehow, I am more certain sure that nothing was ever done in Fairyland without the knowledge of the great Queen. I knew there were all sorts of wrong things going about in that world of magic ; but I knew also—and I had proved it true—that right things always win in the end,

and that then the right things are stronger than ever. Mother, of course, knows all this in some better ways than I do : only she loves those little Twins so tremendously that when her thoughts are all on them, her thoughts do not perhaps quite realize everything else. It's cheek of me to write like this about her, I think ; but it's terribly loving cheek, and she reads every word I write down here, and can scratch it out if it is not quite true !

Well, the two letters made Mother cry a bit, though she was cheerfuller afterwards. It was that same morning that we left the tents to live once more in our old house. Everything was beautifully built up again and nothing seemed changed, except for the new woodwork inside and the poor burned wistaria, which they had nailed up again in the hope that it would survive and grow young flowers on its blackened boughs. We were to have dinner for the first time in the kitchen, so that the day was a great and busy one.

"They will be home again now in a day or two, I feel sure," said Mother cheerfully, "and what a surprise to find their beds back in the nursery ! "

One thing I did which turned out to be very important. I thought that, as a compliment to Smiling Mary, who had been so good to us all for so many weeks, I would make a great pile of her apples—the last we should have of them that year—and would put them on the big pewter dish which shines so brightly between the brass candlesticks and pottery figures on the kitchen chimney-piece ; and I would let it stand in the middle of our long, narrow oak table. Then we could all eat as many of them as we wanted for as long as they lasted, and in our hearts return thanks to the smiling old dear for all her many and rosy kindnesses. I set the dish there while Mother was busy putting to rights in the

dairy. I thought she should be astonished to see, when she came back, how many of our favourite apples were still uneaten. They did look quite grand and lovely and rosy, I must confess, in their bright pewter dish !

Then I went to Mother, told her I would finish the scalding of the churn and milk-pans, and asked her to go into the kitchen to see what she would see—"an it pleases your gracious highness," I added, making her a deep curtsy. Then she gave me one of her best kisses and left me without any word, closing the dairy door behind her.

I don't know what then came over me : when I had poured the boiling water into the churn, instead of swilling it round and round and then throwing it out, as is the regular thing to do, I behaved exactly like a lazy young donkey and began to churn as if I was making butter ! I even began to sing Mother's churning song, and stood there singing and churning, churning and singing, and thinking of nothing at all.

" O, Sally must turn  
The merry old churn,  
Though foam-crested waves of the sweet yellow cream  
Go slapping and splash  
Or singly wash  
On the shore of her sweethearting, daffodil dream !  
O, Sally must learn  
The butter to churn  
If her sturdy red arms are as brave as they seem."

But Mother had an adventure and a surprise. She went into the kitchen. She saw the dish of apples—but not much of *them* ! For there—please believe me !—standing with two hands clasped and the two others holding the edge of the dish, were the Twins, looking rosy and ever so happy.

They saw her instantly and leaped into her arms. Down on the brick floor went her knees, and there never was such a churning together of kisses and laughing and hugging.

"Mother," says Jillie, "the fairy apple-woman says we may have some apples without paying for them. May we, please?"

"Mother," says Jack, "can we have just one, and I'll chop it in half with my sword?"

Then, Mother says, the children's voices sounded far away and very small. She still looked at them as they took hold once more of the pewter dish, and then they looked smaller than ever. On the other side of the dish sat Smiling Mary—Mother took it for granted it was she—under a topping red umbrella. The kind creature was giving the children two apples apiece; by her side stood a raven in front of a big ledger with items entered in it in red ink, and putting spectacles on with one claw. Curdie, Mother saw, was near them too, looking very large and stretching himself.

Presently I, getting no butter from my boiling water, came sensible in a moment's flash and, tingling all over, ran into the kitchen, sure that something had happened. Mother, still on her knees, had put her arms and head on the table and seemed to be asleep. Not hearing me come in, she called out in another second, "Trystie, Trystie, come quick!" Then she got up from her knees, and went to the open window to look over the Downs.

"What, Mother?" I asked, and joined her to look out at the window too.

"The Twins have been here in my arms, Trystie, or I've been asleep and dreaming," she said.

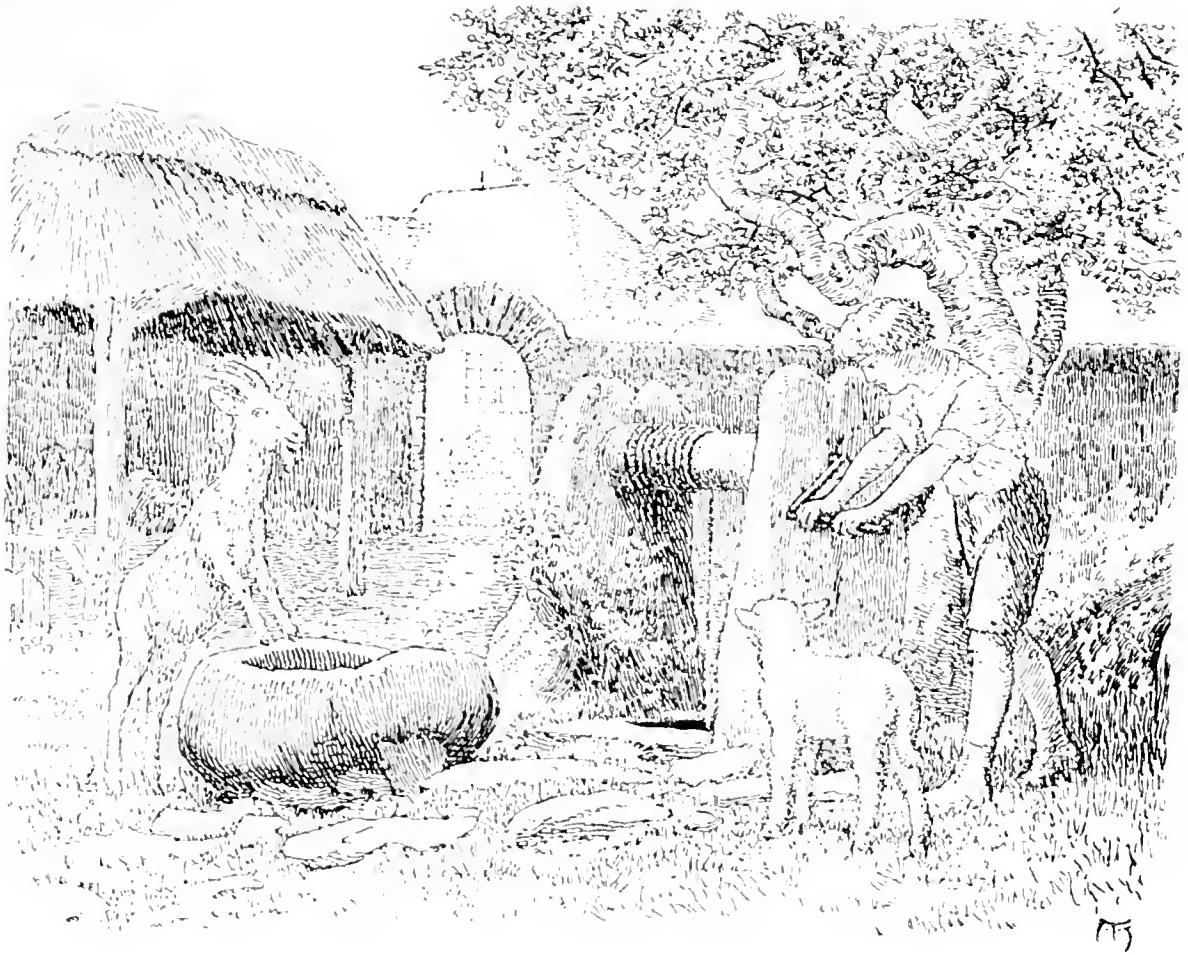
Then Mother turned back to the table and looked at the heap of apples with her eyes somehow still far away. I saw

at once that something had really happened, because I had to exclaim :

“ Mother ! Four apples are gone from the top of the heap. I set the very rosiest there ! ”

“ Smiling Mary gave each of them two,” replied Mother, again looking away through the window and over the Downs. Then she told me all that had happened.

After that Mother seemed to be nearly quite happy till the Twins came home again ; and this although we had some letters from them that made us very anxious.



## CHAPTER XII

### JILL'S HOUSEKEEPING

**S**O the Twins got their two apples apiece, one in the pocket and one in the teeth. They left the apple-stall munching.

"I do believe it's Smiling Mary," said Jack.

"I knowed it was all along," said Jill.

Then they remembered they had not thanked its kind owner, and so turned back to say, "Please, thank you

kindly for the apples, Smiling Mary ! ” Then, as they followed Curdie, Nanny led by Jack and Streaky by Jill, they were silent for some minutes. At last Jill said :

“ Wasn’t it lovely, Jack ! ”

“ But I wish Mother had stopped,” said Jack.

“ Or us,” said Jill, puzzled as to whether their Mother had been in Belmarket or themselves at home. Then she added in a whisper, “ Jack, I want to tell you a secret : let’s never quarrel again ! ”

“ Let’s,” agreed Jack, and they ran after Curdie. It looked as though Jill could not forget the quarrel, so rare and terrible a thing was it for them.

They were walking down the High Street. The shops had no glass in front. They could see the fairy people all busy, though most of them silent and sad. Some were weaving and spinning ; some making toy furniture, carts and wheelbarrows ; others were making shoes or clothes, fashioning little flags and Christmas-tree ornaments ; some threading beads and shells, and some painting wooden toys.

“ Curdie,” asked Jill, “ can we buy things without money like we did the apples ? ”

“ Yes, Miss Jillie,” the good dog answered, “ anything we need and have paid for.”

“ How can we without money ? ” asked Jack.

“ By doing work.”

Then Jill took her spindle and distaff, both of which she had been carrying under her arm, and began to be very busy. Jack got his knitting-needles out of his sabretache, set his sword-belt straight, half drew his sword as if to see that it had not rusted in its scabbard, set his cocked hat on

one side, and began to knit. Then the two noticed that everyone they met either saluted or curtsied in the friendliest manner, though looking very mournful.

"I wonder why they are all sad," said Jill.

"P'raps they are orphans?" suggested Jack.

"Or p'raps they've all quarrelled," said Jill again, little above a whisper.

"No," said Curdie, "it's neither. But it's fear: they don't know whose brother or sister will be the next."

"Next what?" asked Jack.

"The Dragon, it must be," whispered Jill to him, as Curdie made no answer.

"Does he eat them?" again the boy asked.

"No, Master Jack," now answered Curdie, "but it's a mean Dragon, so thin that its scales rattle and fall out whenever it unties its knotted tail. It drinks nothing but tears, and thinks it will get fat if it can only get enough to drink. So it catches little fairies and little girls and makes them cry and tries to take their shoes away. It tumbles them and tears their clothes."

"Do they go on crying long?" asked Jill.

"Till their hearts are all dried up. Then it turns them out and shows them the wrong way home. So that they all go to Raggaplas."

"Do they get their things mended there? Are there any mothers?" asked Jill.

"No, Miss," said Curdie. "They soon find that rags are the fashion there: so they tear each other more—just to be sociable. I don't think they are interested in anything *but* scarecrows."

"Scarecrows!" exclaimed Jill, remembering their friend's family and wondering.

"What *does* the Dragon eat?" asked Jack when they had walked a little further.

"Fishes—and they're all salt fishes, because they live in the pool of tears."

"Does he like them?" asked Jill, perhaps feeling a little sorry for the horrible monster.

"Not he!" said Curdie. "He doesn't like anything. Besides, they are *very* salt. He only keeps alive to drink more tears; but he must eat something."

"Why?" asked Jack. But not even Curdie seemed to know the answer to this question.

Soon they arrived at a little garden with little pink mavourneen daisies and blue nemophilas growing thick all over it, and under a little shady witch-elm in the middle was a crystal statue of Undine. Water was flowing all over it in a soft, thin cascade, coming from somewhere hidden in the tree. Jill and I always loved that story better than any others. At the far end of the garden, with a tall yew hedge on each side, stood the daintiest cottage imaginable. It was built of mossy stones and pearly shells. There was a casement window on each side, wide open as if to welcome them, and a roof thatched with gold and silver straw. It looked almost as if water was running down the roof, though the green and pearly walls were quite dry. Over the porch was written in blue, "*The Twins' Fairy Home.*" On each side was a bell-rope of woven silver spear-grass with a ring of iron. Below the left ring was written in red letters, "*Champion Jack's Bell,*" and below the right, "*Spinster Jill's Bell.*" Everything was most orderly, and whenever the Twins came home after drilling or shopping—and they always went out together—each rang the proper bell before entering—even though in Fairyland there are no fastenings to the doors,

and no servants to answer them, and no excuses for slamming. Now on their first arrival, of course, they both rang and then went into the tiny house.

They found themselves in a sort of doll's kitchen, everything they could desire being in its place. There was a spinning-wheel, a golden saucepan, a silver toasting-fork, and a copper kettle ; besides pearly milk-pans, a well-scrubbed churn, and a milk-pail. Both of these were finely coopered with living honeysuckle for bands. Against one wall stood a dresser with willow-pattern dishes and cups and plates for two ; and on the opposite wall was a row of hooks, each with a label above it bearing one of these legends : " Mail Shirt," " Helmet," " Cocked Hat," " Sword," " Spurs and Mail Gloves," " Saddle and Cloth," " Bridle and Martingale," and " The Knight's Surcoat " and " The Champion's Banner." There was a cheerful wood fire burning on the hearth, with an iron hook hanging over it for the kettle. By the side was a big brick bread-oven and faggots in bundles standing near. Opening out of the kitchen was a little larder, but as there was no food in it they put their two rosy apples on a shelf. Another door opened into a farmyard just big enough for their live stock —a goat-bryre for Nanny and some steep rocks for her to take exercise upon, and a little pen for Streaky, and a pigeon-cote with five holes in it ; and there was a lot of fairy-like red-and-gold cocks and hens, and ducks and one gobbling old turkey-cock. A well and windlass stood in the middle beneath the shade of an old apple tree so like their own Smiling Mary in the orchard at home, that the children felt sure it was one and the same tree. Indeed, though all the growing things about them were in summer glory, this one tree was as bare as when they had last seen her.

"It can't be her!" said Jill.

"Yes it is," said Jack, "'cos she's a fairy old tree, and this is Fairyland."

Out of the yard a five-barred gate opened on to the wide Downs, where only a few paces away stood the hawthorn, Prince Lanty. They could see a flock of our own sheep cropping the short, sweet grass. They came close up to the gates, looked up at the children, and went on cropping with an occasional bell-tinkle and baa. On one post of the gate was a notice-board on which was written :

"Not to be opened or climbed by anybody except Lord Curdie and Kit's Pigeons. *By Order of the Queen of the Fairies.*"

The Twins inspected all these beautiful arrangements.

"I do believe," said Jack, "Mr. Crow has been here and told them we were coming. He *is* a jolly chap!"

"It's him too wrote that notice, p'raps," said Jill in agreement. "It's a joker notice, 'cos dogs and pigeons don't want to open gates."

"Or climb," said Jack; and they went into the cottage again, while Curdie leapt the gate at one bound and disappeared.

Opposite the kitchen was a little bedroom with their own two little beds side by side, and everything just as it used to be before the Farm was burned down. In the middle of the brick floor was a lovely mossy pool of sparkling water with ferns and tiny yellow irises all about the edge.

"That's our bath," said Jill; "but, Jack, I don't believe we've been to bed for days and days. I think Mother would say we *must* lie down for half an hour."

So they went back into the kitchen and unpacked their luggage. Jack hung all his things on the proper hooks.

They unpacked the two boxes, putting the contents away in the dresser drawers. They hung up the little bale of wool, the distaff, and the spindle by the side of the spinning-wheel. All the while they chatted happily about home and the Scarecrow and Smiling Mary. Then they went back into the bedroom, drew the white dimity curtains across the window, took off their shoes, and tumbled on to their beds. There they lay curled up face to face and each holding a hand across as if to keep the other safe, Jack sucking his thumb (though he won't like my telling this!)

"Jill," said Jack, with his thumb half out.

"We mustn't talk," said Jill.

"Just only once," pleaded Jack, "and then I'll be good."

"Well, only once, honour bright!" agreed Jill.

"Jill, do you really think I've got to kill the Dragon?"

Jill was silent for one whole minute. Then she said very slowly:

"I think—I think—of course you have, or perhaps die gloriously!" Then she sat suddenly upright.

"Jillie," the little boy replied, almost in a whisper, "I think I'm almost afraid."

"So am I, Jack," Jill said. "But we've got not to be; and we haven't got your real armour yet, and you'll want a banner. And there's tea to get first—and there's Curdie to show the way! Now, honour bright!"

Then they said no more, but, as soon as Jack had stabled his thumb again, were fast asleep.

The twins must have had a long sleep because, when they got up and went into their kitchen, there sat Curdie watching the fire and holding a letter in his mouth. Mother had written that letter directly after seeing them at Smiling Mary's apple stall, and Davie, on young Diamond's back,

had ridden off to post it in the Hawthorn's letter-box. They kept the letter as their best treasure ; it was the first they had ever received. This is how it reads :

“ My darling Twins,

“ We all love your letters, and hope to have more when you have time to write. But Father and I can see how busy you are with adventures and duties. We want you home as soon as the Queen can spare you. We shall soon be quite settled again in the old home, and the nursery is so pretty waiting for you. Mr. Scarecrow has not come home again, but his old hat has. Your little shoes must have lost their way.

“ We hope you will be very industrious and very brave, whatever happens. Wasn’t it fun the way we met when Smiling Mary gave you the apples ? Perhaps we shall meet again before you come home, if the good Queen can arrange it.

“ Father says if things come very difficult, you must both be braver and braver and just do them. Mother’s advice is to eat no more witch-cake and not to forget the spinning and the knitting. Trystie says, tell them to trust the Queen even in the dark. Kit says all the pigeons are all right, but mind you feed them while they wait. He says he wonders if it is a hundred miles to Belmarket.

“ The others send lots of love and kisses and so does

“ Your loving, loving

“ MOTHER.”

They read it together hand-in-hand and three times over, and then put it into the wooden box with the picture of Pixhaven on it. Then they set out ever so happily with

Curdie to the market to get supplies. There they found everything necessary for making and baking, and a basket for Jill to carry small things in, such as toffee and bull's-eyes and sugar-sticks and brown sugar and cake-currants. They wanted to get more apples, but Smiling Mary was gone home, it seemed, and there were no others to be seen. Jack carried a sack of flour over one shoulder and a great truss of green food all tied up together over the other. This last was chiefly carrots and cabbages for Nannie and grass and turnips and radishes for Streaky. Nor did they forget a bag of mixed grain for the Pigeons. Curdie just walked ahead of them to show the right places for buying all they wanted ; but there was nothing for him to carry, as Jill rejoiced in her big basket and Jack's things were awkward for a dog, even though he was as big as a pony.

As they walked along, Jillie sometimes dancing, Jack sometimes remembering to strut, and Curdie still ahead, Jack said in a very little voice, as if he did not want Curdie or any passer-by to hear :

“ Jill, there are three now, I believe.”

“ Three what, Jack ? Though p'raps I know.”

“ First, there's the two that always was—you know what—and now there's the Dragon.” Jack said this as if it were a confession of something he was deeply ashamed of.

“ I know,” said Jill, as if the three belonged to her just as much as to Jack, and needed no further remark.

But I had better explain this. The “ two that always was,” referred to the Twins' two abiding fears. They originated in the first place, I think, with Jack, but were adopted by Jill also, and inevitably, seeing that they shared everything nearly equally. The two fears were that of the dark and that of toads. They used to talk about these fears

to me sometimes, particularly Jill, who, the more plainly of the two, saw that they were things, enemies, to be beaten. In this belief it seems to me clear that, being more hopeful about their final uprooting, she was the less gripped by the fears. Jack, on the other hand, was more ashamed of them because he took them to be almost hopeless. Jill, as I think will be plain enough by this time, was the readier for any emergency, and now saw how for the moment to tackle the trouble.

"Jack, let's talk about tea and bread and butter and the toffee. We'll have to bake the bread jolly quick. Aren't you hungry, Jack? Aren't you, Curdie? I am, terrible!"

Curdie wagged all over.

"After tea," said Jack, "we'll go and buy my armour and ask the smith to sharpen my sword."

"All right," agreed Jill, "that'll be more fun! Do you think it ought to be chain armour like a Crusader's, Jack?"

"Yes, that would be fine," he answered; "but I think I'd like a busby too, 'cos I'm rather a *little* boy."

When they were near home and were walking in a narrow street a little fairy girl came running from behind, overtook them, ran breathlessly ahead, then looked behind her and stopped suddenly. She was white with fear. Jack and Jill ran up to her, and Jack drew his sword, feeling sure that something dreadful was running after her. The Twins looked back but could see nothing. The terrified fairy child could not say one word for fear and breathlessness, but she suddenly pointed right above her to the roofs and then put up her arms to protect her head. Then Jack and Jill saw the silvery-green, bony tail of the Dragon hanging and creeping down the wall of a house. The three darted to the other side of the street.

"Stand behind me, little one," said Jack. "I can do a bit of its tail."

At that moment the tail moved across the street towards them, waving to and fro, and Jack gave it a terrible smack with his little sword, which, although "knifey" enough for cake, doubled up against the hard, scaly tail. Yet the horrible thing instantly disappeared and they saw no more of it.

"Please," said the tiny maiden, her fear now gone, "I'm Dulcigay!"

"We're so glad you are!" said Jill. "Will you come home and have tea with us? May you? Does your mother make your frocks?"

Dulcigay was dressed in a long, bunchy frock looking like the spring leaves of a beech tree with the down upon them, and woven with sunshine for the warp. So it is not much wonder that they wanted her to come with them; and she gladly went.

It would fill too many chapters to tell of all the Twins' household doings, though they were for the most part happy enough. The way they tell of it gives one the feeling that the earlier part was all a sweet mixing of play and discipline and a good deal of earnest duty. Gradually—yet quickly as we count time—the idea took possession of the two darlings that they were in Belmarket for a very real duty, to the carrying out of which they must be very obedient in everything, lest they fail. The duty of course was the slaying of the Dragon. It is quite clear from their own account of their adventures that, as far as possible, they conscientiously performed all their home duties, though they tell of them only as quite ordinary matters. Thus Jill never omitted her spinning: indeed she made up her mind

that by the time they got home to breakfast her Mother should be surprised at her progress. Jack also never forgot his knitting, and was determined to give up thumb-sucking. They never went to sleep, nor got up, without singing their little prayers. They washed and dressed with every care, though Jack might have become neglectful in these respects but for his sister.



## CHAPTER XIII

### THE LORD HIGH CONSTABLE THE SMITH

**W**HEN the four of them reached home they were astonished. They found the table all set ready with a dishful of Smiling Mary's apples on it, a loaf of lovely brown bread, a pat of butter, a pot of gooseberry jam, and a wonderful plum-cake with "*Champion Jack*" and "*Spinster Jill*" in sugar-plum letters on the top. Jill and Dulcigay began to unpack the stores, but found that the flour and sugar and butter and currants were no longer in the basket : they had gone ahead somehow and were made and baked into cakes and bread all ready to hand.

"It must be Smiling Mary!" said Jill, unpacking the toffee and sugar-sticks, while Jack went into the Farmyard with his foodstuffs for the live stock. Then they sat down with Curdie to tea, Jill said grace, and they found everything as good as home-food. Jill told their little guest all about the Witch's cottage and the nasty cake.

"*This isn't salt!*" said Jack, with his mouth full. "It makes me feel simply jorgous, Jill, and the three you-know-whats much littler things."

Then they had great fun feeding Curdie, to whom every mouthful he begged for was a happy joke. He loved to have the Twins throw him bits of crust and cake, and he lapped up a whole tea-basin full of Nanny's milk. The little

jug would *not* come empty, though the four of them drank quite four times as much as it would hold.

After tea, they cleared the table, Dulcigay, like Jill, being a very tidy little person; and then they had a lovely romping game. Jill was the Witch, Jack went on all-fours for Black Puss, Curdie played Streaky and baa-ed beautifully, while Dulcigay tried to milk Nanny and got a playful butting for her pains. Then Black Puss drew her sword, put on her cocked hat, and pretended Nanny was the Dragon. But this frightened Dulcigay, who was hardly five, and she cried. They were all soon happy again, however, though the game was at an end.

The next thing to do was to go shopping once more—particularly to buy Jack's armour. They asked Curdie if this would be right, and if he would go with them again, “unless you are too busy, please?” asked Jill. They realized from the first that he was a very great person in Belmarket, and that his time must be valuable. Nor was the respect due to him lessened in any way by the fact that he romped with them, would sit up begging for bits of food, and sometimes talked dear nonsense. Curdie always understood that you must talk nonsense to children if you want them to love you as well as understand you.

So all four started out again, Jack being very particular about the set of his sword, Jill even boring another hole in the belt with her scissors to take it up tighter—in spite of the big tea! Curdie led them directly to the hilly street of bell-smiths and armourers, which they could almost have found themselves because of the bell-and-anvil music that rang out of it. Here Dulcigay left them and ran home, because she didn't like, she said, what the noise was for. But she promised to come again to-morrow. The ringing



THE MASTER ARMOURER

(T)



sounds were rather like the music in the market but braver, Jack thought.

“ Clang-a-tinkle, tankle cling  
Red-hot blows !  
Songs we scatter, courage fling  
In thund’ring throws.

“ Clang-a-tinkle, song a-wing,  
The Champion arm !  
Bellows roar and rivets ring  
For Dragon’s harm !

“ Clang-a-tinkle, bells a-ring,  
Now for the fight !  
Shine, good Sword, and stout Heart sing,  
God speed the Right ! ”

The street was narrow and very steep. It was growing late, and the sunny stars were all busy setting, so that before the three reached the top of the street the sky was almost dark. Then it was that, looking down the steep, stone-paved street up which they had come, they saw bright red light streaming out from the smithies on each side. Now and again, as the music rose and fell in rhythmic waves, a more ringing note would be sounded, when a pure white flashing star would shoot out from one or another smithy and rush aloft into the sky, there hovering till it fell like a meteor into the horizon’s sea. The bellows roared like organ bass and gave solemnity to the inspiring and joyful sounds.

At the top of the street was the Master Armourer’s little house and smithy. He was the Lord High Constable of Belmarket and so worked harder at his anvil and forge, and

had more apprentices than any others of his Guild. A strong fairy man was he, with long bared and blackened arms, a leather apron, and short, thick legs. His beard was white, of course, but cut very short, and out of his grimy face peered the kindest of blue eyes, so young and tender-hearted that the children loved him. He dropped his hammer and tongs when he saw the three looking over the half-door of his smithy, and came to them, holding out his big, strong hand.

"Champion Jack, my friend," he said, "canst thou shake hands with the Master Smith and feel no fear?"

Jack held out his little chubby hand and liked the strong, hard hand which then held him.

"Jillie, my brave wench," he went on, "thou, I perceive, hast no fear either, though most who climb this hill, I wis, can never wear my armour."

"Can Jack, please?" asked Jill, letting her hand bide in his and looking straight into his eyes. He was indeed a little shorter than themselves, but so fine and strong that this counted for nothing.

"Ay, my pretty one, an thou lendest him thy succour. Wounds grievous and deep may he earn. Yet if thou dost bear his grief and mend his broken limbs, methinks he will keep his courage."

"Shall I kill it?" asked Jack, now eager to do all that was asked of him.

"Ah, my man! that I know not—no, nor the Queen either. But this much do I know truly: though thy courage live untarnished, thou mayest perchance be slain. One thing alone needest thou be careful for—that thy courage shine right mettlesome and starlike."

The Twins could not understand this, I think; but the

mighty fairy smith's words made Jill feel very brave for Jack, and Jack very brave with Jill standing by him, her hand in his.

"Be there not, little ones," asked the Lord High Constable, after blowing up his fire and then returning to the door to look up into their faces—"be there not three things that ye hold in fear?"

Jack was silent and looked down at his fairy shoes which gleamed in the dark night. Jill kept her eyes upon the fairy smith's strong, tender eyes that shone blue into the night, and presently said :

"Yes, Lord Master Smith, but I think we are conquering two of them : at least we always never mean to be afraid next time!"

"Jack, my lad," said the Smith, "I will speak thee troth. We fairy people in Belmarket, strong enough though we be, cannot slay this green and slimy monster. We need a Champion from Thickland, because the Dragon comes thence, and fairy courage will not wholly avail. It is for this that our Queen—honoured be her mighty name!—hath brought thee here, Jack. For no Champion without a twin sister to hold his courage in safe keeping could, nor by prowess nor by magic, prevail. But thou hast two things to do first. Fill up the black hole of darkness by entering it and casting forth its terror. That will be the first fear overcome. Then thou wottest right well of the second—the cold, misshapen, crouching toad. Him must thou learn to walk with in brotherly love, for thus only shall thy second fear be mastered. These things done unarmed, thou wilt find strength to bear the Champion's armour and courage to conquer thy remaining fear, the Dragon itself. Wilt thou do these things?"

Then Jack whispered to Jill, “Tell him *yes, please, I will!*”

So Jill spoke for him. “Yes, my lord, I am sure he will! And I must too.”

Curdie, who was lying down beside them, now got up and began to rub his ears against the children’s shoulders, first one, then the other. They loved this, they said, because somehow it felt like Father and Mother touching them.

Then, shining like the brightest gold and silver, the Smith slung across the back of Jack’s neck, over his shoulders, a rolled-up coat of mail. He gave to Jill a white linen surcoat with a great red cross upon its front. He strapped on to Curdie’s back a silver shield, on which was fashioned in gold inlay three sheep with bells for one quartering, three sheaves of corn for another, above and below which in the other quarters a single sheaf and one sheep. With this he laid a helmet—the kind, I think, called a basnet—and asked Jack for his sword and belt, his sabretache and cocked hat, which the child took off and gave without a moment’s hesitation.

“If and when thy two first fears be slain,” said the Smith, laying the little sword with its flimsy belt, the sabretache, and hat upon the forge, “thou climbest once more my steep street, I know not but the Queen herself will bless and gird a great and puissant sword upon thee with her own hands. Now hie ye home with my Lord Curdie, and bravely dream those things ye wot not of.”

Then he turned to the forge and laid mighty hand once more upon the bellows. The flames roared and leapt, covering the little toy sword and belt and sabretache and cocked hat; and up with their smoke sprung red roses that

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fell in glowing hot petals, while white lilies rose and broke into stars that sped over their heads out into the night along with the bellows' roar. Neither Jack nor Jill, I believe, felt one pang of grief when they saw no more the brave toys, the companions of so many a play adventure. Still looking with wondering eyes into the forge where the ashes of their playthings were glowing, both Jack and Jill felt sure they saw, lying partly covered by them, a silver-bright sword-blade, sharp and long.

As they walked down the ringing, roaring street with red light and stars streaming out of the smithies to right and left of them, they felt that *pretend* was gone for ever. But they spoke never a word.

In the kitchen they found Smiling Mary, with her dear old face and rosy cheeks and big bonnet like apple blossoms, waiting for them. Their nightgowns were hanging each on a three-legged stool before the fire, though how Smiling Mary had got them Jill could not understand. She gave them milk to drink and put them to bed with such gentle hands that they were almost asleep before they knew it, and could not afterwards but think it was Mother herself who had sung with them a new hymn as they kneeled hand-in-hand by their little beds.

It must have been upon the same evening that I heard Mother singing in the nursery as she was putting things in order for the little ones' home-coming. Her song was very like this, I think : Mother herself has quite forgotten it :

“ Blow thy strong winds straight into our skies,  
When the dark clouds are gathered together ;  
Drive away mists that come blinding our eyes,  
When the storm breaks away from its tether.

## Jack and Jill

“ Scatter the black thing that wraps us in shame  
When the light of the day-shine is hidden ;  
Give us thy lantern of star-kindled flame  
To lead us where'er we are bidden.

“ Blow up thy slumbering forge in our heart,  
And burn all the terrors that harm us ;  
Let witches and dragons of Fear then upstart,  
For a sword thou hast welded to arm us.”

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE CHAMPION'S FIRST FEAR

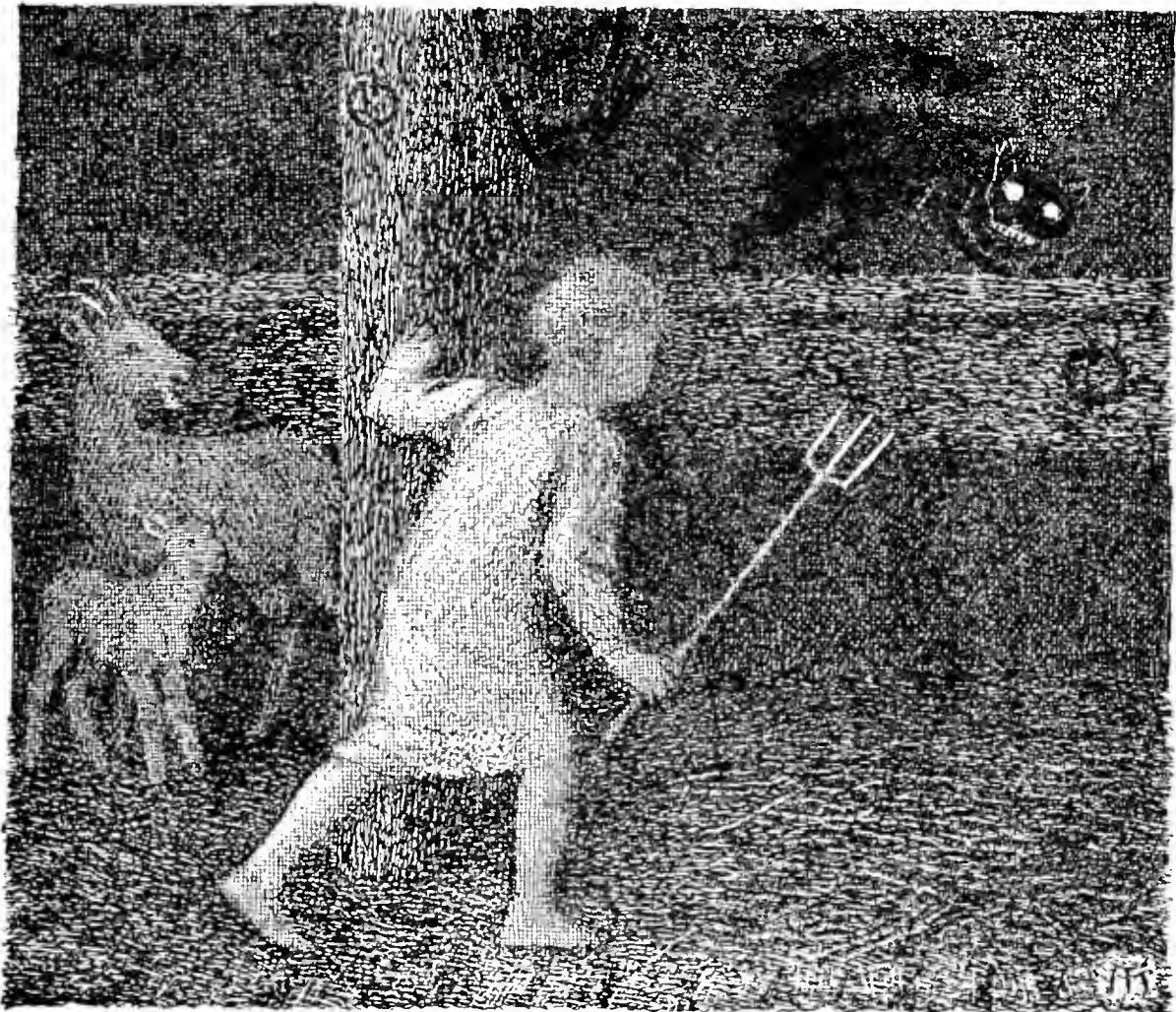
THAT first night spent by the Twins in their own cottage was full of importance. Jill fell asleep very quickly. They were still holding hands, but their hands were covered by the bed-clothes which they always stretched across the intervening space, because they did not like even their hands to be outside in the dark. Jack lay awake a long time sucking his thumb and thinking of the championship he had undertaken and determining to overcome without any delay the first at any rate of the three terrors.<sup>1</sup> A new desire also had possession of his heart : if he could but do it alone without Jill's help he would have conquered it for her as well as himself. Yet to do anything at all without her was almost unthinkable—the only attempts ever made being such as followed upon their rare disagreements.

The boy, covered up to his eyes, now stared into the great darkness. It filled the little room and seemed to come so close up to him that he could touch it if only he dared put out his hand from under the bed-clothes. To touch the awful thing was inconceivable and full of dread. On the rare occasions when the two would speak of this, it was in softest whisper, lest the Darkness should settle upon them and take its revenge. It was because of this fear that they never went to sleep unless hand-in-hand across their beds. Staring now into the black, unfeelable nothing, it seemed

<sup>1</sup> Jack wants me to say that he had given up sucking his thumb for years and years—except in bed.

impossible to offer it the opportunity it always waited for. Yet he would often remind himself that things like rabbits and foxes live in dark holes and take no harm ; that owls and bats even go about in it and somehow find light enough for their wings to fly. He knew there was nothing at all to fear in it—except its black, soft unfeelableness ! Then he thought of the Dragon and the little fairies weeping and weeping till their hearts were dry ; and then of little Dulcigay's terror at the beast's green tail ; and he remembered his new friend the Master Smith who trusted him and said the only important thing was an untarnishable courage—whatever that might be.

In tenderest care he slipped his hand out of Jill's. Before moving any further, he waited to see if she would stir, but she lay still and slept. Then slowly, carefully, and, I think, still in terrible fear, he sat up in bed, but instantly dived under the bed-clothes again, hopelessly unable at that moment for further courage. Yet, yet, those little fairy girls crying and crying ! He could almost hear them ! And Dulcigay—supposing *she* were caught ! Or Jillie ! The last thought was so awful that once more the curly little head and white face crept out from the bed-clothes ; but he had to stop and listen, listen ; and he forgot the wet thumb. He listened and listened because he heard a little bleating wail somewhere outside the house. Nanny must be crying ! Then came Streaky's plaintive baa just like her crying for her dead mother when Kit first brought her home. With hair all a-tingle, but with that self-possession which Father says comes to every heart when its love is needed, however timid its nature, Jack now quickly and softly, without disturbing Jill, crept out of bed and found it was not so dark but that he could find the door into the kitchen.



THE FIRST FEAR

The fire on the hearth then leapt into a bright flame. The child went to the hook on which his sword had hung, but then, remembering it was burned up into roses and lilies, he picked up the silver toasting-fork and, without one moment's hesitation, ran across the little farmyard and into the byre where Nanny and Streaky ought to have been asleep. The door closed behind him, and it was not the less terribly dark that two green slit-eyes of some great cat were staring at him from the height of a manger at the far end of the byre.

"Nanny dear!" said Jack, cheery and brave, even if his

voice was shaky, “Streaky dear ! It’s me, your little Jack. Don’t you be afraid of Black Puss !” Then he called in his ringing, baby voice, “Curdie, Curdie, here, Curdie ! Cats, Curdie, cats, old boy !”

The child, however, never waited for Curdie, but ran and gave the green eyes a great thrust and then a sounding whack with the toasting-fork. Black Puss gave a howl and was gone. Her blackness being lifted, the first rising star shone through a crack in the wooden wall above where she had stood with arched back terrifying the goat and lamb. Then Jack could see quite plainly. He comforted the two animals, found they were not hurt, gave them a carrot and turnip apiece, then fastened the door firmly and started across the yard again. But he had to stop and listen to a conversation that was going on :

“Black Puss, Black Puss, did you make it blacker ?”

“Yea, but Jack gave Black Puss a whacker, whacker.”

“Black Puss, Black Puss, have both their hearts grown stronger?”

“Yea, Witch, they’ll fear the dark no longer, longer !”

“Black Puss, Black Puss, your wicked eyes ain’t shining !”

“Nay, Witch, I’m blind now, and whining, pining !”

“Black Puss, Black Puss, the dark will no more fright ‘em,  
So get them in the toady hole and blight ‘em, blight ‘em !”

Jack did not wait to hear more, but went back into the cottage with much to think about. Which half of the Witch’s words was he to believe this time ? he wondered. Had he beaten his first fear ? He hardly dared think he had, because he had only forgotten to be afraid as soon as he heard the dear animals crying. Would a “toady hole” be terribler than the darkness ? Were there boy-eating toads in Fairyland, friends perhaps of the Dragon and the

Witch and Black Puss ? He crept into his little bed again, fully believing that he had done nothing beyond forgetting his fear of the dark, and that both this and a blighting toady hole had yet to be overcome before he could wear his armour and get his puissant sword.

Though he was somehow no longer afraid of the dark, Jack reached out for Jill's hand and found it waiting for him. This woke her up.

"Is it nearly morning, Jack ?" she asked.

"I don't know a bit," Jack answered ; "but I saw one star going about in the night."

Then he told her his adventure and what the Witch said.

"P'raps the half about toads is make-up, and p'raps you've really beaten the dark besides Black Puss. That 'ud be jorgous, Jack !"

"Let's go to sleep again, Jill."

So they were silent a few minutes. Presently Jill said softly :

"Jack, are you awake ?"

"A little bit, I think !" said he, taking his thumb out of his mouth.

"Jackie dear, I just want to say 'please, thank you,' because I do believe you've beaten it—the dark, I mean. It seems nice and jolly now."

"But I didn't *do* nuffing. Things did themselves, and I forgot," Jack insisted.

"Let's hug !" said Jill.

"Let's !" was the usual assent.

But, in spite of her brother's modesty, Jill, as they lay down again, thought he must really be a champion and had already begun to champ. She hoped Curdie knew and would go and tell the Master Smith.

Hardly had the Twins' eyes opened in the full daylight than they heard the sweet and gentle old voice of Smiling Mary singing in the kitchen. Sitting up in bed, this is what they heard :

“ Perfect Love casteth out  
Every kind of fear,  
Be thy love for bleating lamb  
Or thy sister dear.

“ Perfect Love buildeth up  
Courage in thy heart,  
Be the love in clasping hand  
Or stronger, far apart.”

Then they went to the door and peeped in. There was a bright fire on the hearth and the kettle hanging over it. Along the edges of the bread-oven door they saw the flames inside and heard the faggots crackling, for that is the way the old brick ovens are heated before putting the loaves in to bake. In front of the fire stood six little loaves of floury dough smelling sour-sweet and getting warm to make the yeast rise well before baking. Smiling Mary was setting the breakfast things out.

“ Good morning, Smiling Mary,” they said. “ We will get up quick.”

Then first Jill, then Jack had a bath. Softest, greenest moss was now growing over the floor, and round the edge of the pool daisies and grass and milkmaid and cowslips. When they were dressed they found everything ready for them in the kitchen, though Smiling Mary had gone away —to the market, they supposed.

That day proved a very busy one. The one disappointment was that Dulcigay did not come. After breakfast

General Leprecaun called upon the Twins to give them advice. He wanted them to realize that they were beset with real dangers, and must be the best of children in doing the Queen's work. She had sent him now, he said ; and he promised to come often, though he could never stay for long, partly because of the water-springs getting so salt and partly owing to the Queen's enemies waxing so strong on many sides—all because they thought the Dragon and the Witch were going to win. He had his work cut out, he said, and Jack and Jill had theirs. Everyone in Fairyland must do his own bit. He warned them against the Witch as much as the Dragon.

" It's a brace of twins themselves they were, once upon a time," he said, " though the one of them will have the same mother and the other another one. But the two of them had different fathers to them entirely. Will it be plain to ye now ? "

" Please, how could they stop being twins ? " asked Jill.

" 'Twas the quarrelling undid them. Neither of them could agree which was the Witch and which was the Dragon. Whatever way it was, 'twas the other one both of them wanted to be, at all, at all. Even when they were parted, 'twas no better, because they could never agree which of them *was* parted ! Begorra ! 'tis not even what they hate they can agree upon : 'tis the Dragon for the one, 'tis the Witch for the t'other."

" Which is oldest ? " asked Jack, who thought this should settle some points, as it did with themselves sometimes, when Jill would claim to be two minutes older.

" With twins in Fairyland," explained the Brigadier-General, " one of them can't be older than the other—unless 'tis the both of them are."

"But *can't* they be twins always?" objected Jill.

"Not when it's untwinned they are by the spalpeen of a quarrel," said the Leprecaun.

This settled it, of course. But both Jack and Jill felt sorry for their enemies' loneliness.

Then the General gave Jack a lesson in fencing, lending him a long, blunt sword to practise with, and while himself pretended to be the Dragon. He showed him all sorts of tricks and dodges—how he should fall flat if the Dragon leapt at him, and then how he could turn on to his back and thrust his sword upwards into the creature's pinky-white throat where there are no scales; or how he was to leap high when the monster came at him with crawl-belly rush and then wheel about and with full swing of his sword sever the knot in his tail. This, he explained, was an ingenious trick invented by St. George himself, one he had found of use in overcoming *his* Dragon. Then there was a device (a *devoice*, he called it, I think) for slicing off the monster's scales and keeping the eye warily upon the bare spot for the sword's opportunity. But he explained that great danger lay in the scales themselves, which were always being shed and made the courtyard very slippery, though the kind General could guarantee the Twins' shoes would hold fast on anything as long as their feet held to them.

Jack was as hard as nails, but was tired after the stern lesson; and when the Leprecaun left them, telling Jack he was the "broth of a boy," the two sat down to write home. Jill had been spinning hard and watching the practice intently, and so was glad of a rest too.

I do not think I shall give many more of their letters, though they were important enough and increasingly interesting. Sometimes they were written in such haste

and excitement that they were almost unreadable. Sometimes Jillie's had nothing of happenings in them, but were full of longings and, now and again, almost of despair. Some of Jack's were as brief as a business man's, merely advising us of progress and encouraging us to hope. Such letters made us anxious enough, as will be presently understood. It must be remembered too that what was but an hour to us was often a long day to them, full of adventure and tragic possibilities. Consequently the letters came fast and thick : Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Fanny must have been badly taxed to do all the work. Also it must be remembered that the differences in time-value made it seem to the Twins that we were not writing as often as we might.

Many letters, particularly the two written after the first fencing lesson, were full of questions, and particularly about long words. Thus Jack now wrote along with other matters :

"Please, Mother, what's untarnichible curage ? and what's a pweesant sord ? General Lepricorn—I think this name must be Fairyish for Peppricorn in English—he says I am a broth of a boy. Please am I, and what's it ? The other words the Master Smith said——" and so on.

Jillie's letter revealed a bit of anxiety as regards Jack's sense of propriety. "Would it be write," she wrote to Father, "to wear a busby with a mail shirt and Crusader's surcoat with a topping red cross on it ? Jack wants to, but I don't think it's like Champions." Then she told how Jack had overcome Black Puss and the Dark, so that they were not afraid of that any more ; what a dear young old lady Smiling Mary was, and how she did the cooking and singing. "I think, Mother," she concluded, "we are good children."

It seems to me that the dreadful occurrences, which nearly upset all the Queen's plans and nearly deprived our Twins

of their glory, must have begun soon after this first lesson in dragon-fence. What with being a little proud of himself for his night's conquest and being a little tired with his long morning's fencing, Jack took his first actually selfish step that same evening. I will recount the events very briefly.

After dinner Curdie came back. He had been sitting all night on the ramparts watching the Dragon's movements, as the monster was getting more insolent and daring every day, and now had two knots tied in its tail—"a bad sign," Curdie declared, "in any sort of beast!"

He now told the Twins that there was to be held a great review of the whole standing army that very afternoon, and that Jack was expected to take the command and drill them. He said all the fairy ladies would be sadly disappointed if Jill didn't come and bring her spindle: they wanted to see if General Jack could drill as fast as Jill could spin, Curdie added, though this was one of his little jokes, I think. The army, it seems, had been getting ready for many weeks to do battle with the Dragon—but it was weak as a whole, as there had been no one at leisure to take the command. Jack had had some experience at home in drilling, his infant corps at our village school being greatly admired by everyone for their discipline and general efficiency in broom and fan drill.

The drilling and spinning in the Garden of Arms went off satisfactorily, both Jack and Jill being royally received. The standing army was nearly at its full strength, twenty-five men all told, its full complement being twenty-six when the Lord High Constable, the Master Smith, was at liberty to join them. Jack's opinion was that the army was too large because the Dragon would see it coming. Nevertheless, it had its uses—but for defence rather than offence.

The drilling over, the army marched round the narrow footway on the top of the battlemented walls and then back again by the river-banks. The joy of it for Jack was that he rode at the army's head on Curdie's back, who was saddled and bridled, and just about the right size for a child to ride. Curdie was lovely to behold, Jill says, so cleverly did he play his part. Jack carried the Leprecaun's blunt sword at his side in its scabbard for appearance's sake. But he had not yet won the right to wear his armour.

The inspection of the ramparts and defences being satisfactory, Jack rode back home while Jill walked at his side, spinning and full of pride for her brother. At the Cottage, Curdie left them, and Jack ought to have been just a little boy again.

But Jack was cross and selfish. He told Jill that the Champion's tea ought to have been ready for him, that Nanny wasn't milked, and that there was hardly any toffee left. He even told her that her duties were at home while he was "Smarting up" the great army. Jill was only a little huffed at this, and did her best. She found everything ready, however, the milk, the bread, the toffee replenished, and everything in its place. So, instead of helping her to get the tea, Jack wrote this letter to Davie, whom he always looked up to as the greatest living authority on horses :—

" Dear old Davie,

" I wish you was here with us. The saddle is a funny one but all rite for a charger, I dessay. And comfy to sit upon when you stand up in the stirrups like champions do. And it wants a crupper to hold it tite. Curdie stands quite stil and dusn't kick when us two pull the gurths tite. Nor bite like the colt does. Please write what crusaders do with

crappers when chargers don't have any tale. Curdie's saddle has got a ring for the cruper and we spose somebody made it on purpose though there isn't one and its red leather and silver and quite strong. Is tales made for crappers or ornament, please. Jillie says ornament but I know its crappers.

“ From your lovingest little brother,  
“ JACK THE CHAMPION.”

This done, the two had tea and were soon happily talking over the day's doings and their future plans. Yet Jack could not keep his eyes for long off the hooks on the wall where hung his mail-shirt, his surcoat, and his helmet. He had unsaddled Curdie when they reached the door, and had hung up all his accoutrements in their proper places.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE SECOND FEAR

**I**T would seem that our Twins, loving so dearly, accepting all their happinesses and duties, hopes and fears so trustfully, were, in this magic town of Belmarket, to go through the sort of trials which do not come to many children. That they sometimes failed because they were not loving enough, they know quite well ; that they often succeeded splendidly because they were true and brave, they also understand. For their failures they know they must blame themselves ; for their successes they praise each other, Curdie, and their other kind friends. The consequence is that, now they are at home with us again, they are just the simplest little children, and talk of their adventures as of a wonderful story they had been part of, but were only a little bit responsible for.

The next night—I write of Belmarket time now—the two of them had to face the second fear. It was, as I have said, a horror of toads. We don't know how it first arose. Mother thinks someone must have frightened them when they were very little. With every warm-blooded animal they were as fearless as the rest of us ; but they always had hated the touch of frogs, adders, slow-worms, even earth-worms, slugs, and snails : while, even when they were as old as six, they would run screaming from a toad, and sometimes dream of it and wake in terrible fear. So it was a worse fear for them to overcome than the unfeelable dark.

Night falls in Fairyland directly after tea. On this one in particular both Jack and Jill were very sleepy and Jack

suggested going to bed without their bath, though, with its mossy banks and grassy floor, it smiled at them and felt quite "sunny-warm," as Jill said, when they dabbled its surface with their pink toes.

"Let's lie down for a minute and think about whether we'll have it," suggested Jill. So with only shoes and hose off and, I am sure, feeling very guilty, they crept on to their beds.

Whether they had been asleep or not, they cannot understand ; but presently their consciences began to trouble them about their laziness. From their beds they could just see the little pool of water : they even saw ripples on its surface and could hear its fairy waves lapping on the mossy banks. So, remembering they were no longer afraid of the dark, they determined to get up and look at the water, just to decide whether they would get into it or not.<sup>1</sup>

Quite glad to discover that perhaps they were going to be good after all, they went hand-in-hand to the edge of the bath. But they were instantly horror-struck ! for there, staring at them with fixed vermilion eyes, sat a huge, yellow-and-black-spotted toad. They were paralysed with fear, and not even the conversation they heard close to them between the Witch and Black Puss could make them run back to bed again.

"Black Puss, Black Puss, the toad is old and greedy ? "

"Yea, good Witch, and the mud is black and weedy, weedy ! "

"Black Puss, Black Puss, will it poke Jill's eyes out ? "

"Witch, we'll dance to the wailly song when she cries out, cries out."

Then they saw the loathsome creature beginning to get larger and larger and larger ; its eyes grew brighter ; and it opened wide its toothless mouth. Still the Twins could only

<sup>1</sup> By the way, they are quite sure there is no soap in Fairyland : one day they tried to buy some in Belmarket, but the shopkeeper only smiled and said nothing !



THE SECOND FEAR

grip each other's hands and feel cold creeps coming all over them. Next, one after another, twelve very small toads crept out of the water on to the mossy bank and ranged themselves round the big one. But the Witch and Black Puss continued to talk in another strain, as if they themselves were now feeling rather nervous :

"Black Puss, Black Puss, suppose the toads should cheat us!"  
"Yea, old Witch, we'd better run—they'll eat us, eat us!"  
"Black Puss, Black Puss, I'm getting very nervous!"  
"Buck up, old Witch, the Dragon still will serve us, serve us!"

That indiscreet admission of the two plotters must have given some heart to the terrified children. Yet the thing that next happened paralysed them still further ; for the small toads all jumped on to the old toad and clung with their arms about its throat, so that it began to gasp for breath. Then it took a header into the bath, where it lay on its back suffocated by the little ones which seemed to be strangling it.

"I'm a-going to take them off of it," said Jack.

"No, you mustn't, you mustn't," said Jill in an anguish of fear ; "they do it to entice us in, and we shall be eaten alive ! "

But Jack pulled his hand away from Jill's and got into the bath, nightgown and all, keeping his feet clear of the horrible creatures. Though he now saw the water was full of wriggling tadpoles, he sat down on the mossy edge, and without any hesitation began pulling the little toads off the big one, and throwing them towards that corner of the little room where the Witch and Black Puss seemed to be talking. Miouing and slapping sounds suggested that the missiles were doing some execution, though the young toads ran back to the pool again. Smacking their lips, they now swarmed over Jack, who was lifting up with his two hands the monster toad. Jillie's turn was now come. She could think of nothing but Jack's safety, and without hesitation seized each toad as it ran up his back or arms and threw it against the wall. But now the tadpoles were fast changing into toads in horrid numbers. Out they all came from the water, croaking and leaping towards the twins, whose only chance lay in flight. They ran through the door into the kitchen, slammed it behind them, and set their backs against it. They were now clear of all the horrible things, except

the big one Jack was holding carefully in his arms. Its gasping mouth was wide open and it looked straight into its captor's face with shining, jewel eyes. Jack felt kinder and kinder towards it.

"Get her some milk, Jillie : I'll hold the door ! "

"I think," said Jill, coming back with a mug of milk and a horn spoon, "she must be an enchanted prince. P'raps she'll show us the way home."

The croaking had now ceased ; but while the old toad was slowly gulping down the milk, they heard the Witch and the cat talking again :

"Old Witch, bad Witch, get your broom a-straddle—  
Show the Twins your cloven hoofs—skedaddle, daddle ! "  
"Black Puss, Black Puss, jump upon my shoulder ;  
Then I'll feel a better Witch, and bolder, bolder ! "

As the Twins now recite the cat-and-witch conversations—which they do most funnily, Jack playing the Witch and Jill, Black Puss—they are comical enough. But at the time the unseen quarrelling things seemed to add enormously to the dangers, in spite of its being plain enough that both Witch and cat were now themselves afraid. Help soon came to the Twins, however.

But first they had to run again ; for the toads had got out at the nursery window and were now leaping in at the garden door. Without thinking what to do, the children with their burden ran into the farmyard. There the little hens came forward in a body and attacked the toads with the fury of mothers defending their chicks ; and the turkey-cock gobbled them up alive. The children ran straight to the well and Smiling Mary's tree.

Then they saw Mother coming into the orchard at home,

as if expecting to find them there. They just rushed into her arms. Jill fell a-weeping and could not stop sobbing. Jack had only one arm for his Mother, because under the other he was cherishing an ordinarily big toad.

"Please, darling Mother," said Jack, "keep him safe for us. We love him and I don't think we're *much* afraid of the others now!"

"The fairy hens," said Jill, lifting her head and checking her sobs, "are do—do—doing fine for *them*!"

"Is breakfast ready yet, Mother?" asked Jack.

"Why," answered Mother, "it's dinner-time! Run up into your old nursery, children. You'll find it so lovely, and have a good wash after holding that old toad, and then come down and surprise everybody!"

"That'll be jorgous!" said Jack. Mother kissed them again and off they went hand-in-hand, Jack saying he would leave the toad in the bath till Father had said what was to be done with her. Jack was convinced the creature was the great-grandmother of all the other toads.

Jill was now all joy.

"Jack, do you think the story is done?" she asked.

"It can't be, I don't think," said Jack, "there's the Dragon to come and there's my puissant sword."

"Let's be quick now," said Jill, intent upon home realities, as they went into their old nursery, now looking so sweet and fresh again, and the little beds so inviting. They shut the door behind them.

It must have been at that very moment, Mother says, that she felt a door close again in her happy heart. She went into the kitchen, following the children. Dinner was ready and I was there. She called to them up the stair. There was no answer. We went up to fetch them. The

room was empty save that in the middle of the floor stood the Twin's little tin bath half-full of water, and in the middle of it sat the toad blinking its jewel eyes.

This was how it happened.

The children, having put the toad in their bath and poured water in to refresh it, felt so sleepy that, both thinking the same thoughts and forgetting everything but the sweetness of their beds, they tumbled on to them and fell fast asleep. As you may easily guess, they awoke in the same place they went to sleep in ; but, though that place was of course their own nursery, it is hard to say whether it was at home or in Belmarket. Anyhow, with the early fairy morn they rose, found their mossy bath sparkling with tiny waves and its grassy floor so clean and bright that they had no fear of mud or tadpoles, but splashed into it as happy as young moorhens.

"Kit will be kind to our granny toad, I do believe," said Jack. "He likes toads and things."

"I think we do too, Jack," said Jill, "only p'raps it's funny-love!" Funny-love was a word they now adopted and kept for use when they felt affection for any ugly thing. Father said that they probably felt it a paradox to love things so unnatural to their own nature as cold-blooded amphibians, and so needed a modified word to express their feelings. At any rate the making of the jointed word shows clearly enough that the second fear was now overcome.



JILL'S DISASTER

## CHAPTER XVI

### JILL'S DISASTER

THEY began that day happily enough, Jack talking about nothing but his bravery with the old toad. Though he would not put them on, he wasted time turning his mail-shirt and helmet over and over, instead of helping Jill wash up the breakfast things and tidy up. He even said he was not going to do girl's work any more. Jill, naturally more industrious, was too busy to resent this, though it hurt something in her very much.

While it was still quite early, General Leprecaun came, and with him Curdie. The General gave Jack a short lesson and found he had made so much progress in the noble art of dragon-fence that he proposed taking them both to see the Master Smith, who might now, the General thought, permit him to wear his armour. So Curdie was saddled after Jill had well groomed him with her hair-brush, while Jack did the hissing—that of course being a man's business ! It was great fun ! But the General made Jill ride him, because, he said, she had been doing the best work that morning and would be spinning all the way. Behind her, on the dog's back, was strapped the armour, the surcoat, and the shield, while Jack, walking like a faithful Squire, carried his practice sword.

Arrived at the Master Smith's, that doughty man must have a fencing bout with the General—an exploit that

filled Jill's heart with loving amazement and Jack's with awe and a sense of his own weakness. Yet in spite of his inferiority, no sooner had the two experts finished their round, than the Smith declared that Jack must now prove, by standing up to the two of them, his right to wear the armour and wield the puissant sword. Instantly Jack drew his weapon, shouldered his shield, and then took up his position with his back to the half-door. He began the attack, Jill says, with his eyes flashing sparks out. He forgot all he had been learning, but rushed at the two, belabouring them to right and left with his sword, soon casting aside his shield because it interfered with his freedom. Jill says the three of them were all over the place, though the High Constable and the General kept close together, so that Jack's two opponents should seem more like the one Dragon he would have to face very soon now. Jack got some nasty smacks with the flat of one or another of his opponents' swords—smacks that sent him flying across the smithy, once tripping over the tongs ; and, if Jill had not instantly run forward, he would have been down and, according to the rules, done for. But the child's agility was wonderful, and he ran in again upon the two fairy men with such a rush that they threw down their swords and declared themselves beaten. Jack knew better, you may be sure ; but he was happy enough in their praise, though his left arm was so badly bruised that, the excitement over, he nearly cried with the pain on the way home. This, however, he could not consent to do because he was now wearing his mail shirt, his helmet, and his surcoat with the great cross upon it. But his puissant sword he had not yet won.

Before, however, they went home, they had audience of the Queen. Curdie knew the way and took them to her

Court. She told them how glad she was to welcome them ; that Jack, though growing very brave, was not yet unselfish enough to carry the fairy sword, and that he must, like all true champions, keep lonely vigil in the Cathedral for the space of one night, and then, if that made him a gentler-hearted little boy as well as a braver champion, she would dub him knight and give him his sword. After that he would have to challenge the Dragon to mortal combat without any delay. Then she took from her bosom a shining silver distaff. It must have been studded with rubies and diamonds and sapphires, because Jill saw their light sparkling and shining through the bunch of silky wool which was tied around it with a rainbow ribbon. Jill does not know why she did it, because she had no time to think first ; but she dropped on her knees before the Queen, who then touched her head with the distaff and said, in the sweetest voice :

“ Arise ! Lady Jillie ! You have your spinning to do for me, my dear. Without your work and hope and trust, Jack, brave boy though he is, could hardly win his day. Arise, little Jill.”

Then the Queen gave her the distaff, which was a magic one, took her in her arms and kissed her—“ Just like Mother,” Jill says, and told her the distaff was for her very own.

They have no memory of what the Court was like or where it was held, whether out of doors or in a palace. All they remember is that the great Queen was so beautiful to behold that they saw nothing but herself : yet they cannot describe her in any words.

Judging from what followed, some might think that the Queen had made a strange mistake in dubbing Jill *my*

*lady* before Jack had won his knighthood. They will wonder too what she had done to earn it. But I know the Queen must have been wise in what she did. I myself had long ago learned this thing in Fairyland : that honours are bestowed on children and dogs and squirrels and all noble people, not so much for the great things they *do*, but just because they *are* kind and true. A rose or a daisy is not made beautiful by the Queen because they do great things, but because they are true and kind. I think that must be quite plain.

Well, presently the Twins found themselves walking down Smith Street again with only Curdie for company. They went on foot looking so proud and happy that all the fairy people bowed to them. Many of the ladies came and kissed Jack's hand, and many of the Trolls—these did all the hard work, smiths', joiners', miners', and woodcutters'—picked up the hem of Jill's frock and reverentially put it to their lips. One after another told them of a little sister who had disappeared and must be in the Dragon's cruel keeping. "For," they said, "our own tears are running dry. We feel her drawing them from the wells of our hearts to replenish her own hot eyes. The Dragon forces her to give more than she has of her own ! "

Another would say, "Oh, fearless Champion, lose no time now. My little sister, I know, is torn into rags and will be driven out hungry and ashamed and will never find her way home. Haste thee, too, my Lady Jillie ! "

One or two ran past them taking no notice, because they were wringing their hands and knocking at every door to ask if their dear lost ones were perchance within.

Oh, in spite of the honour given them, it was all sad and terrible for Jack and Jill to see.

"Oh, Jack," said Jill, "let's be quick and champ!"

"Let's!" said he—and made big plans and resolutions.

When they arrived home they found the writing under Jill's door-bell was altered. It was no longer "Spinster Jill," but "Lady Jillie." Jack's name was wiped off altogether, as if its place was waiting till his new title was earned.

Smiling Mary had a lovely dinner for them. As they were washing their hands and faces and brushing their hair in their nursery, she was singing again. Her words puzzled them at the time, I think; but they understood them well before they got home to us:

"Your love has cast out and away to the wind  
All fear of the night and the toad;  
But a bear of black danger is creeping behind  
With a spell that the Witch has bestowed.

"Between your two hearts, with invisible tread,  
It will growl and keep watch, wide awake;  
Till, wounded in heart and wounded in head,  
The twain shall the wicked spell break.

"But ere you shall drive the spell right away,  
Alas! Jack and Jillie, my dears!  
You will fondle that bear, though it darken the day,  
Till the anguish brings merciful tears."

As they came into the kitchen and sat down and said their grace, they heard the dear Fairy still singing in the farmyard:

"One must fight and one must wait,  
One go, the other stay;  
One come soon, the other late,  
But both shall win the day."

They were very silent all through dinner, thinking things that have no words ; but they ate heartily enough. Dinner done, they went for a walk hand-in-hand round the ramparts on the top of the walls. The army had a half-holiday ; and so Jack took the opportunity of a personal inspection. He wanted also to find out where the Cathedral stood, as, small though Belmarket was, they had never yet seen it.

Standing together on the walk on the battlements, not far from the main entrance-gate—the one looking towards the mountain of the Brazen Castle, you know—Jill pointed out the two spires of the Cathedral and knew why they had never seen them before. They were crystal, and so beautifully carved and fretted that she could see right through them. Jack could not see them anyhow. Jill described the place exactly.

“ That’s silly,” said the Champion, drawing his practice sword and shouldering it, “ that’s where our cottage is.”

“ ‘Tisn’t silly,” asserted Jill, pointing her finger towards the middle of the town, “ because it’s *there* ! I can see it as plain as plain can be ! Look, Jack, look harder ! ”

“ I can’t look harder,” said Jack, now very cross, “ and I shan’t. You are telling stories, though you *are* Lady Jill.”

“ Jackie dear, I’m so sorry ; but the Queen said I was, not me.”

“ I’d just like to know what *you’ve* done, Lady Jill ! ”

This made Jill first indignant and then, because of its injustice, quickly angry. The tears filled her eyes.

“ If I was a boy and a champion, I know *I* wouldn’t be afraid of any Dragon in the world—that *I* wouldn’t ! ”

This was what she said, but immediately thought she heard Smiling Mary's voice singing :

" You will fondle that bear, though it darken the day,  
Till the anguish brings merciful tears."

But Jill was now nearly as unjust as Jack, and Father says being unjust is being untruthful. So both of them looked cross and ugly. Jill turned her back and walked away.

" Come back," shouted Jack, stamping his foot.

" Shan't ! " shouted Jill back again.

" *Shan't* to the Champion, Miss ? "

" My lady, if you please," retorted Jill.

" That I never, *never*, NEVER shall ! " shouted Jack, and angrily struck his sword on the battlement. It broke and fell down with a ring and clatter on to the stones outside the walls. " There," he added, " that's all your fault, Miss ! I'm disgraced, and I'll *never* love you any more." He burst out crying.

" Jack, Jack ! " now called out Jill, already penitent for her share of the quarrel. " We'll soon get it, and Master Smith will mend it."

Gloomily they went down the stone stairway, but only to find the gates shut and barred for the night. Not even the Commander-in-Chief could overrule the Queen's orders. So they must get home quickly, and Jack hoped, as it was now past tea-time and the sun-stars nearly all out, that his empty scabbard and the futile hilt in his hand would not be noted.

That next meal was a sad affair. Jill tried more than once to make up the quarrel ; but each attempt made matters worse, so that she became hopeless and then added fuel to the

fire. If Curdie had been with them I don't think things could have reached such a pass ! At last they even went to bed too sulky with each other to talk ; and Jack tumbled into bed without his bath and without saying his prayers, yet was soon fast asleep. Jill took her bath, brushed her hair, felt sorrier and more ashamed, took her magic distaff, found it gave enough light from its jewels to spin with, and took it with her spindle into bed. There she sat up and felt still more sorry than ever in her life before, because, for the first time, Jack had gone to sleep without her hand in his. It was terrible, and she saw she must do something to make amends, even though she didn't think she *had* begun the quarrel.

The night was always pitch dark in Belmarket, yet Jill determined to go through the streets to the main gates — the little postern of which she could perhaps open, as the Troll-janitors would be asleep. With her distaff for light and her spindle for company, she would be able to find the broken sword and bring it back to the Champion before he was awake. And then he would be brave again and keep his vigil and win his puissant sword and kill the Dragon for evermore. And *then* they would go home and perhaps Mr. S. Crow and the Master Smith and Smiling Mary and certainly Curdie and the animals would go with them.

Jill always acted immediately upon a decision—in this respect quicker than Jack. Knowing the streets would all be empty, and the people all fast asleep, she did not even wait to dress. She found her way, opened the postern, looked out into the dark country beyond, saw even a distant glitter on the distant brazen walls, and then found the sword-blade exactly where she thought it would be. It

was quite blunt, you know, and so there was no danger in carrying it.

Just as she was stepping back through the postern something came from behind between her and it. She was pulled back with such a jerk that she dropped the sword, but luckily kept tight hold of her distaff and spindle. Then the thing came right round her and, like a boa-constrictor, nearly squeezed the breath out of her. She felt herself lifted up and carried away at a terrific pace—so that her long plait of hair streamed out behind and tugged at her head. She knew instantly what had happened: she had been whipped up by the Dragon's tail and was being carried away to the brazen castle. But now Curdie was racing after her, though his four legs were not fast enough for the Dragon's six. As he ran, however, Jill could just hear something of what he was barking after her.

"Don't be afraid, Lady Jill. Take care of the distaff. Don't forget your spinning. Don't cry—then he can't hurt you. Jack will come—and me. The Queen sends—her—love. Can't run—or bark—any more now! Good-bye!"



THE VIGIL

## CHAPTER XVII

### JACK'S VIGIL

MEANWHILE Jack did not sleep soundly. He woke very miserable, and wondered dreamily why he was miserable. Then suddenly remembered everything.

"Jill, Jillie!" he said, reaching out his hand for hers, "Jillie, wake up, please. I'm so sorry and mis'able! It must be all that Witch's spell. *I will* be a good little boy again, Jillie! And I'm *so* glad you're a lady now."

But there was no response. He crept over into her bed and found only the cold sheets. He found his clothes in spite of the dark, dressed quickly and donned his mail shirt, which he had thrown down beside his smock and other clothes. Then, with many a swallowed sob though never a tear, he went out of the nursery, but, to his amazement, straight into the nave of the Cathedral, followed by Curdie, whom he had not seen was with him. Deep and sad music like marching was coming from a great organ. Into this music broke now and again exultant singing like larks in the blue heavens.<sup>1</sup> As the two walked side by side up to the chancel, Curdie told Jack all that had happened. He told him too that no harm would yet come to Jill, but that he must win his sword without any more delay. "For that

<sup>1</sup> Jack always loved larks beyond all things. He would, even when a toddling baby, always be good lying on the grass and listening to them.

quarrelling," he said, " might have put back all the Queen's hopes for ages."

" Then, Curdie," said Jack, " I must keep my vigil here alone. Please come in the morning and take me to the Queen. Perhaps she will give me my sword even though I haven't won it."

Jack kneeled down before a great red cross that shone high above him. Curdie bent his head down and rubbed one ear against his little master's shoulder: then he was gone. Jack beheld above him a high vaulted roof with pointed arches, faintly shining, bluey-white in the darkness. He knelt there, for many hours, his face uplifted, his hands folded, his shining chain-armour dimly reflecting the light from above. All through the night that cross shone before him. Its light was like the early dawn, and around it burnt rosy flames, throbbing rhythmically as though it was the heart of the vast Cathedral. Although not a word passed his lips, a great vow was springing up from the deep ground of his heart. It started from a little seed born within him at his birth, but lying as yet asleep. As he kneeled, it grew strong of leaf and opened out a little blossom ready and sure for a noble fruit. The blossom was the vow ; the fruit would be the knightly deed of laying low a monstrous Dragon, of delivering countless little people from their rags and tears, of lifting from the great Queen's bosom her great anxiety.

At last came the morning, the chancel-roof became clearer, more transparent, more and more beautiful in shining sculpture of all the apostles and saints and heroes, and all the flowers and fruits, and all the brave animals that ever had been. Then it all vanished, and the boy Champion found himself kneeling on the floor of the kitchen in the fairy cottage, his eyes resting upon the red cross of his own

surcoat that hung from its two hooks on the wall. The child rose, put on the surcoat, and saw breakfast laid for one. For a moment he put his head down on the table and wept as a penitent child alone can weep. Then instead of the usual grace, he sang, in softest, broken little voice, one verse of the hymn Mother had made for the Twins themselves :

“ Two such little children we !  
Give us faith to love and see ;  
Give us strength to do our part,  
Brave in arm and meek in heart ! ”



## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE DRAGON AT RAGGAPLAS

THE story of the Twins' doings must be written properly, even though it seems unkind to stop telling about Jill just when she is being rushed through the air in the grip of the Dragon's tail with two knots in it—one round her and another to keep the first from slipping. It is hard too to leave our Jack all alone, thinking how the Dragon had caught Jill all because he had been boastful and quarrelsome, while she was brave and loving in seeking the broken sword. But he knew he must cry no more now—indeed, he thinks all his tears were wept away in the great chancel. He had to find his way to the Queen, and get his puissant sword before he could set out on his great undertaking.

But the Twins' further doings can hardly be told until certain other things are related—particularly some concerning Dulcigay and the Scarecrow. I hardly ought to speak of him in that familiar way : the Twins, indeed, will not allow it ! For, as will have been realized long ago, he was—and still is of course—a tremendous person in those fairy domains which come so close up to our own land that they overlap and make ours beautiful to behold. I can't help thinking that the only really happy places are those where they most overlap ; and I'm sure that the happiest hearts are those that breathe the fairy air while they walk on hard roads, or see by the light of the fairy suns when, but for

them, the roads would be too dark to lead anywhere worth going.

The Scarecrow, as everyone knows by this time, lived in Raggaplas—or rather, close by it. Curdie and he were the greatest of chums, and Curdie often had to pay him flying visits on important State affairs. The Scarecrow was the only other person in that town of dried-up tears and raggedness who could come and go as he pleased between it and Belmarket. He had been made its secret Governor by the Queen. Being High Admiral he knew all about tears and storms and tattered sails, and so was the right person. Besides, he was so breezy and such a loving joker that he could help small craft to weather their miseries and keep afloat, even when driven so far out of their right course as Raggaplas. Consequently, though there were more sorrows than playtime in Raggaplas, this Governor managed secretly to keep heart and hope alive in almost everyone.

The very day following Jill's capture there had been a queer and horrible holiday in Raggaplas. The town was expected to find for the six-legged monster, who kept it in such abject fear, somehow, somewhere, a child crying. The reptile was getting desperate for lack of tears to drink—not because fewer fairies were captured, but because his thirst grew worse and worse. Demands of this sort were made through the Dragon's Chancellor, Her Craftiness the Witch, whom, with her secretary, Black Puss, the little people feared almost more than the Dragon himself.

Now Raggaplas was the stupidest place in all Fairyland—if only because everything seems to have been inside out. The houses were most especially so. There was really more outside to them than inside. The streets ran inside the houses—and ran too fast to be at all pleasant, Curdie said,

especially as they were all up and down and very steep, just as though they were staircases. Then the bedrooms stuck out, outside the walls, so that when you tumbled into bed, as you were always ready to do because you were so tired, you nearly always tumbled out on the other side—and further. The beds sloped away like a desk. The tables, whenever you tried to sit at them, turned over and stuck their legs into the air like a lazy dog, so Jack declares. The chairs, knowing that Raggaplas people mostly get sat upon if they make the slightest remark, sat upon anybody offering to use them : it saved them some inconvenience. Then the food was no better. If, for instance, you tried to eat an orange, you were apt to find yourself inside that orange instead of the other way about. If you took up a bit of cake it became so heavy that you had to drop it. If you tried to drink a cup of milk the milk would pour out too soon, thinking you needed a bath—as probably you did. The gardens grew nothing but houses, and so were underneath them and difficult to get at without knocking the houses down first. The coal-cellars were at the very top of the houses, and nearly as useless as the gardens, seeing that the coal-hole being undermost, whatever you tried to throw in fell back and hit you on the head. Indeed, the gnomes, who followed the honourable calling of coal-heavers, were struck so often that they started a strike of their own. It was the same with everything, and everything was too stupid for words. But the tearless stolen fairy girls did not mind because they were too dirty, too unhappy, and all in rags. What clothing they had was, like the houses, mostly inside out and much more out than in.

I am afraid this is all not very intelligible. Although, as you will hear before long, I and Kit went with the Twins

to Raggaplas, he and I have but a faint memory of the place. I have tried my best to get from the little ones a good description of it, but even Jill is distinctly confused and sometimes even contradictory about it. I have to confess that my account of it is almost entirely based on Jack's, and that he is become such a young joker that sometimes we wonder. Curdie absolutely refuses to speak about the ugly place except in his funny, upsetting way. The Scarecrow never came back. Smiling Mary, if I ask her, only smiles and promises to give us next summer a finer crop of apples than ever before. But I don't think it would be possible to give any idea of a place which was so hugger-muddle that it could not be accurate itself, and whose every idea was tumbledown. Certainly from top to bottom it was scarecrowish.

Well, the holiday made no difference to the miserableness, because there was never any work of any kind. The only things that kept them alive with some spark of hope in them were Admiral Scarecrow, Lord Curdic, and the old Apple Tree in the market-place. Whenever the Dragon was not there—he came only for a few hours every day and could not stay long because it was such a thirsty place—the Admiral with his pigeons—Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Fanny—played games and danced with the little people, Curdie cut jokes, and the Apple Tree gave them heaps and heaps of apples. She dropped them as soon as they were ripe, and would not allow anyone to pick them. After a game, or a dance, or a joke, or an apple the little people looked quite different and gave up jeering at one another's rags and tatters. Fortunately the Apple Tree never ran dry like the children's tears : three times a day, regularly, she provided a fresh supply of the juiciest, crispest apples. The tree was,

as you will of course have guessed, Smiling Mary. So you see, though at first sight one might think this Raggaplas was quite given over to the Dragon and his servants, the great Queen still kept it alive with the fairy spirit by sending her best-beloved friends secretly. Yet the three felt it almost too much for them, seeing that, until the Dragon was slain, the number of the tearless was constantly increasing.

"How long must we stop here?" Dulcigay once asked Curdie, when some of them were sitting down by Smiling Mary, while she ripened the next lot of her fruit.

"Longer than my tail," Curdie replied, wagging all over.

"That's not very long!"

"Isn't it? Wait till you see me tie a knot in it!"

"It's too short!" several of the fairies exclaimed, thinking perhaps that, after all, he had a little one in his thick, shaggy coat.

"It will be long before I get a longer one," he answered, shutting one eye, "so you'd better *not* wait for the knot in it, but go away now."

"How can we?" asked Dulcigay.

"Try dancing," said Lord Curdie, quite serious now, and sitting down on his haunches for friendly talk.

"We can't in rags," she said; "it wouldn't be tidy or fairy-like!"

"Oh, indeed it would!" contradicted his lordship: "if you only danced fast and prettily the rags would all fly into rainbow colours and let the shine out!"

"The shine all went out ages and ages ago," one of them whimpered.

"Not quite all," he said quite lovingly. "I can see it right enough: only you've *got* to dance. That would make

the laugh come. And when the laugh had found its way out you'd all feel sorry for the rags instead of cross ; and then perhaps tears would flow, and *then* you'd feel the shine and find the way home ! ”

After which remarks, Curdie stood upright on his hind-legs and made Dulcigay—such a shabby, tattered little fairy now—take his fore-paws in her hands, and they began to dance. He was just the right size for her, having made himself quite ordinary. Once begun, she couldn't, of course, leave go, and had to dance, round and round, faster and faster. They made the most beautiful figures, under one another's arms and round again, leaping high, separating, pirouetting on one toe or one hind-paw, then joining again till all the others clapped their hands and nearly laughed.

Then Curdie set his little partner down again, and they all saw she was not only rosy-red with the excitement, but shining through her rags. Curdie, feeling something was gained, left that group of scarecrow fairies and went off on some other work.

But no sooner was his back turned than those who had been looking on at the dance began to jeer at the shining little one's clothes.

“ Such an exhibition of rags *I* never saw ! ” said one.

“ Most improper, I call it, for a little ruffian to carry on like that,” said another, called Prudifay ; “ and all with a bob-tail sheep-dog too ! What *will* people think ? ”

“ He's Lord Curdie ! ” said Dulcigay angrily enough ; “ and I love him ! ”

“ It's all very well to love dogs and people of that sort when we're at home in Belmarket, but I'm quite sure it isn't proper here, Miss,” said Prudifay.

Dulcigay ran away in a rage and wished she hadn't for-

gotten how to cry. She soon came back, however, to Smiling Mary for comfort, and put her arms round the rugged old trunk. The kind tree dropped one beautiful apple at her feet—so beautiful that, instead of eating it, she ran off after Curdie, meaning to give it to him and thank him as prettily as she could.

No sooner was her back turned than Prudifay exclaimed :

“ I believe the little minx is going to blub ! That would be fine, because she would make a lovely present for the Dragon ! ”

But most of the others were shocked at this heartlessness and left her alone.

On his way to the Market the Admiral met Dulcigay with the apple in her hand. He had three pigeons sitting on his shoulders—Matthew, Mark, and Fanny; Luke and John had flown away on some business or other. He asked her why she didn’t eat it. She sobbed out—but with no tears, of course :

“ Be—because it’s for Lord—hup—hup—Curdie ! ”

The Admiral then took her hand and whistled loud and long. “ Curdie, my good lord, Curdie, Curdie, I say ! ” he called. The good and wise dog, knowing his friend’s voice, and that he would summon him thus only if the business were very urgent, ran up panting.

“ Dulcigay is my little friend here,” began the Admiral.

“ I know her well and love her,” interrupted his lordship, smiling kindly.

“ She was running after you to give you this splendid apple.”

“ Oh, thanks, little Dulcigay ! ” said Curdie. “ Smiling Mary had really been growing this splendid one for Lady Jillie, who, I am sorry to tell you, has been caught by

the old Dragon. May we take it, Dulcigay, to her ladyship?"

Dulcigay was, of course, only too happy, and wanted to go and join Jillie, in spite of the Dragon. But this could not be; so away sped Curdie again, holding the apple in his teeth by its long stalk.

Then the ragged, grubby little fairy girl began to sob again.

"They're all so—hup—hup—horrid, and I do wish—hup—hup—I could cry," she confided to the kind Admiral, "but I don't know how!"

He lifted the sobbing little thing into his arms and began chanting to her one of his soothing rhymes :

"Cry, Fairy, cry!  
Put your fisty in your eye,  
Pull your little mouth all awry,  
And cry, Baby, cry!"

This made her laugh just a tiny bit, and then—wonder of wonders!—she started weeping and weeping. "And, and," she said at last, "I don't know what I'm crying for!"

But Admiral Scarecrow knew, though he just said nothing at all, only walked on faster with Dulcigay in his arms, gently rocking her and patting her back as though she were indeed a baby. That, as I understand, is the sort of way the secret high rulers in Fairyland do their governing. The three pigeons—Matthew, Mark, and Fanny— jerked and turned their sleek little heads about, and sat still. Presently the Admiral told her that Raggaplas was not safe for her now, as many of the people who had been longest there would tell the Witch she had been crying, and then Black Puss would come and take her back to the Dragon.

So he was going to carry her home with him to his own family. Then she threw her arms round his neck and kissed him.

Dulcigay asked him about the Champion and his sister. Her friend knew everything, and told her how Jillie was captured, how Jack had kept his vigil, and how, that very morning, he had won his puissant sword.

"All is now ready," the Admiral said, "and that is why Curdie left you so suddenly after that jolly dance."

"Is the Champion sure to kill it?" asked the fairy child.

"Nobody can be quite sure," answered the Admiral, setting her down to walk with a hand in his, while two pigeons perched on her shoulders, "but I think so. The danger is very, very great. If Jack were slain there would be weeping and mourning all over the Fairy World."

"Won't the puissant sword do it? Isn't it magic?" she asked.

"The magic and the puissance came into the sword during the Champion's vigil. The magic was in him, and had to get ready by fasting and prayer. Then came the great vow. Every Champion's sword is magic and puissant if he is a true knight!"

"I once had tea with the Champion and Lady Jill, and such a romp afterwards," said Dulcigay very thoughtfully, "and I *wish* I could spin!"

"All my children do that, and you shall learn at once, little one. It is spinning keeps them all safe."

They were out of the town now and walking uphill by the side of the shining-star waterfall. It rushed, glided, and slipped over the pearly stones and emerald mosses, now and again falling into a cascade of splashing bells and cymbals. A shouting, merry troupe of dancing fairies and

children came running down to meet them. They were all in tatters and rags, but neatly mended, and so clean and shining with joy because their father was come home. There were two hundred and twenty in that family—all sizes and all ages and all kinds of happy faces. They came running round the little dirty outcast from Raggaplas. “One more sister,” they called out. “Oh, how jolly ! Come home and get washed. We’ve lots of rag-bags, and all the rags are jolly colours ! And they fit anyone of us exactly : that’s the best of rags !”

Unfortunately, I have but a disjointed account of these happenings in Raggaplas, and none of the information comes first hand. It is put together from one thing and another told the Twins by one and another person. I gather, however, that that very afternoon being a holiday, the Dragon held Court in the market-place as far away as possible from the apple tree, which tree a salt-fish eating, tear-drinking creature like the Dragon would naturally despise and fear. He sat on an enormous brazen throne. His tail was wound round and round the legs with a knot round each. The Witch stood beside him, making the most hideous grimaces, with Black Puss on her shoulders, sneering and spitting. Beyond his castle the Dragon was quite unable to speak. His head hung down, and his black tongue lolled out as if he were exhausted. Now and again he lifted his head and opened his awful mouth so wide that tongues of flame and black smoke darted out.

“Have ye found a crying fairy, ye two-legged, ramping rats, ye mithering mice ?” asked the Witch in her sharp yell, hissed through her pointed teeth.

Then Prudifay stepped forward as far as she dared, and Black Puss stopped spitting.

"Please, oh most merciful," said Prudifay, "we nearly got one of us to cry : she would have done nicely, and was rather tidy too. But the Admiral came and took her home. So please forgive us, and we'll get another by to-morrow."

"My Lord Dragon," said the Witch confidentially to her reptile twin-brother, "this is getting past all bearing ! How dare that Scarecrow interfere with your rights and innocent pleasures ! He, indeed ! The scaringest, crow-ingest, ruffiduffian in the whole town ! But I'll get them to dance and sing : perhaps that will make one or two cry. You must be getting shocking thirsty, poor sufferer ! "

All the tyrant's answer was to roll his eyes hungrily round the little crowd and to bellow at them hoarsely.

"Dance, ye tasty morsels, ye lardery ducks !" the Witch screamed, while Black Puss arched and spat.

But they all began to shiver with fear, and only when Black Puss ran behind and drove them forwards did they timidly dance something without form or measure beyond shivering and shaking. It was not the sort of dance Curdie wanted of them, you may be sure ! This is what they sang, though they tried their hardest to remember the songs and bell-tunes of their home :

"Weak and wobbly, winky wum,  
Fairies a-sobbing all gloomy and glum,  
Trying to cry, but all dumby dumb—  
The Dragon is King of the Castle !

"Tying his tail in a slippery knot,  
The fairies must dance him a gay gavotte,  
Till tears tumble down, fresh salted and hot—  
The Dragon is King of the Castle ! "

So the Court reception ended. The Dragon gave one great bound into the air, and took himself back to his castle. He must have remembered suddenly his latest capture, Lady Jillie, and perhaps wanted to see if she had begun to weep.

## CHAPTER XIX

### JILL IS CAST INTO A DUNGEON

THE Dragon had left Jill sitting by the pool of tears, ordering her to cry her eyes out or give up her shoes. The water had got very low, so that there was no room for the salt fishes to swim and they had to walk about as best they could on their hind-tails, Jillie says, with heads and shoulders standing out of the slimy green water. Jillie took no notice whatever of the order, except that she sat down. Above her she saw a row of windows running round the tower, and out of each leaned a little girl fairy weeping. Their tears ran into a stone gutter that lay beneath the windows, and one ugly gargoyle was pouring all the tears out of the gutter into the pool by which she was sitting. She called out to the weepers and bade them cry no more.

"Jack," she said, "is my twin-brother. He's a Champion too, and is going to kill the Dragon soon, I think. So don't you cry any more, little ones!"

Then Jill looked pityingly on the poor salt fishes for a few minutes, took her spindle in her right hand, and with her distaff under her left arm, began to spin. The Dragon came back stealthily crawling from behind the tower, and tried to startle her by saying "Bo," in all sorts of different ways. Jill never moved an inch, but kept on spinning.

"Stop that! I hate it," said the Dragon, opening his crocodile mouth so wide that Jill could see a thousand teeth

and little bits of ragged clothing sticking on their sharp points as though he had been mauling and tearing somebody's little frock. "You've got to cry hard! If you don't I'll hurt you and tear your frock, or tickle you and take your shoes off. Cry instantly, I tell you!"

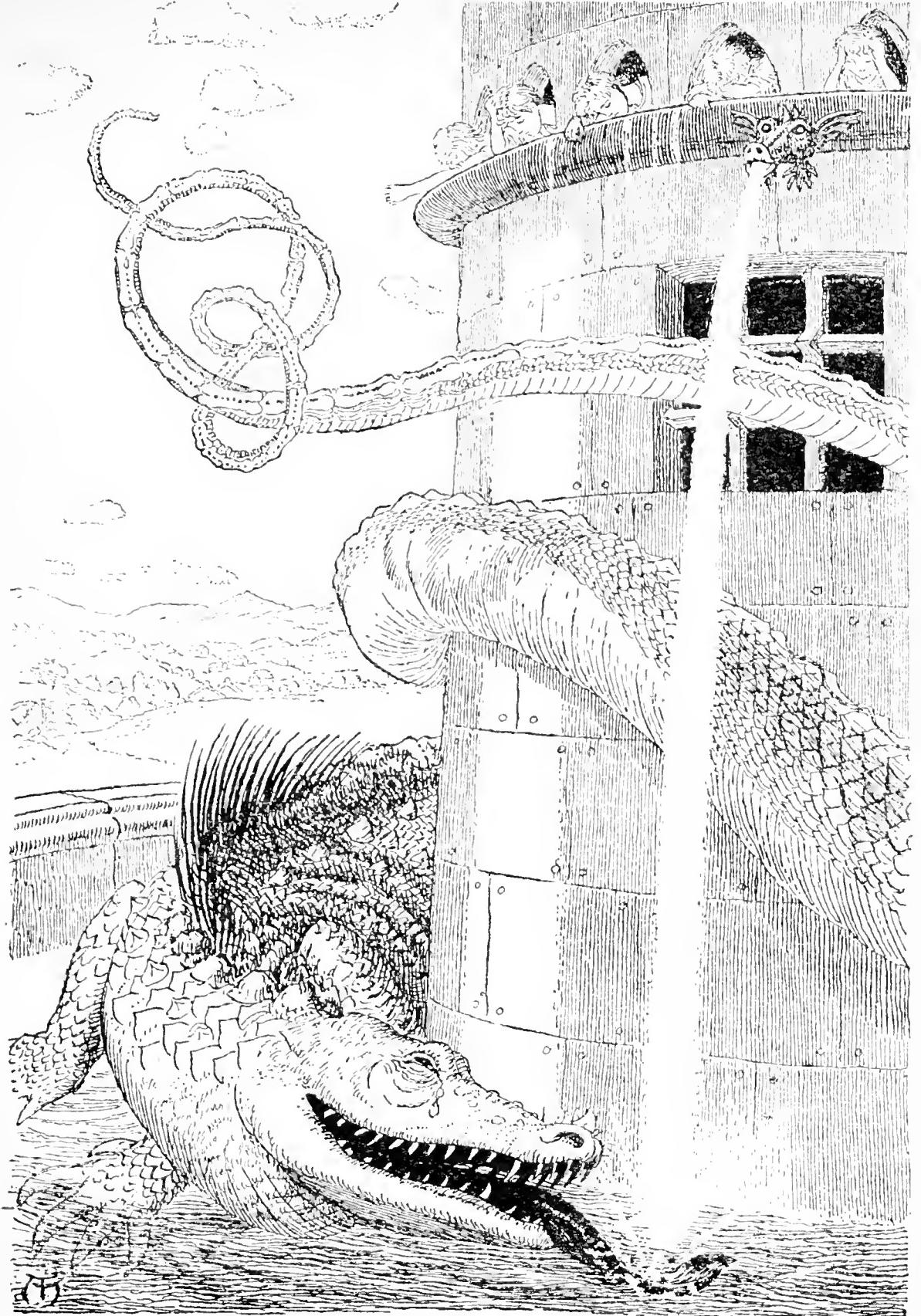
But the little salt fishes all called out, "Don't! Lady Jillie, don't! Go on spinning!" and immediately they ducked under the water to avoid a slap from the Dragon's tail.

This made Jill laugh, in spite of her anxiety for their safety; apparently none of them was hurt, for they began to make rude faces at the Dragon. Jill began to spin again.

"I hate it," again said the Dragon, showing his teeth with a snarl, and slapping down the point of his tail so close to Jill that she jumped away in a fright and dropped her spindle. "It's unnatural! It's magic! It makes me thirsty; and the tear-water has got as low as my poor spirits. Stop it, Lady Jillie!"

Jill, of course, would take no orders from that sort of person, but picked up the spindle, just as the Dragon was going to draw it to him with an outstretched claw. So the Dragon hurriedly left her; but, crawling away across the plain towards Raggaplas, he looked back again and again over his shoulder as if in fear of her magic pursuing him.

Then there came to her one of Kit's pigeons—Fanny, this time—bringing from the cottage her work-box and stationery-box and hair-brush; also a letter from Mother. This made her cry for a few seconds; and her tears ran down her cheeks so fast that they ran in a stream into the pool, nearly filling it up. The salt fishes said, "Thank you, my lady, but don't! don't! don't!" and had a very



THE POOL OF TEARS



refreshing swim, because the tears were every one of them sweet and good. So Jill dried her eyes quickly and read her letter.

" Darling, darling, my Jillie," it ran, " I know you will be brave and help Jack all you can. It must be a huge task for so little a boy to do ; but if he wins his puissant sword (that's the way it is spelt) he will win his day and you will both come back to your loving Mother's heart.

" P.S.—Don't forget the spinning."

Then Jillie wrote an answer directly because Fanny was waiting and trying to find among the loose scales something worth picking up.

## " BRAYZN CASTLE.

" (I forgot if it's Monday or Friday.)

" Darling little Mother," Jill's letter ran, " I love your letter, though it made me cry and I mustn't. Cos the dragons cort me and I am in the brayzn castle. The Dragon's a nasty beest and tied me up in a not in his tale. He's all mouth and tale and six legs with webby feet. And clors. He talks terrible sad. The Witch is his twin. I don't know anything about Jackie and I do wish and wish we didn't quarel always again. I know he will come soon and champ the dragon and then Curdie will bring us home.

" I won't forget my spinning and the Queen gave me such a lovely distaf. Its majik and always ful.

" I am half of your loving twins, JILLIE."

" P.S.—Do you know I am Lady Jillie now, here I mean not at home. The Queen made me, please.

" P.S.—Please tell Robin I wish he was here for to clime the big tower and fetch the crying fairies out of there nest

cos it would be kind to rob it. Honeypot too, for she'd soon believe in fairies what cry."

She put it in an envelope. Then she licked one-half of the gum and stopped to swallow down the lump that came into her throat : she thought how gladly she would let Jack do all the licking if only he were there ! Then she tied it under Fanny's wing with a thread of her spinning. The bird flew away, and the child let her spindle and distaff and stationery-box lie in her lap as she watched the bird's disappearance. Then she saw lying on the edge of the pool a panting little fish. The dragon's tail must have broken its back. Jill opened her work-box, took out the stitchwort and laid it on the fish's side. The bright needle and greeny-grey thread then began to sew so quickly that it was quite impossible to see how it was done. In one minute the sewing ceased, the fish stood up on its hind-tail (as Jill persists in calling it), made a little bow to her, and leapt into the water again.

Jill then closed her eyes, sleepy, I should think, after her adventurous night. She thinks she did not dream, but heard Curdie's gentlest bark and Smiling Mary's sweet voice close beside her :

" Lift your eyes up, Lady Jill,  
Tears no more the pool shall fill ;  
Lift your heart, the Champion swift  
Comes the fairies' curse to lift.

" Raise your eyes up to the stars,  
Lady Jill, and break the bars ;  
Fold your hands, the thread's well spun,  
And Jack his Puissant Sword has won ! "

Then Jill opened her eyes, felt wonderfully refreshed, and saw lying in her lap a big red apple, and by the side of her, in a tidy heap, all the clothes she had left at Belmarket. She ate the apple, every pip of it, throwing away only the core and stalk. Then she felt strong and loving, because she knew Smiling Mary and Curdie too had been with her.

She needed all her courage and wits too. For, turning her head, she then saw, lying beside her and stretched out at full long length, the Dragon, with his black tongue hanging down into the pool of tears, and his tail curled round the keep. Suddenly he pulled his tongue out of the water, uncurled his tail, sat up on his four hind-legs, and roared up at the crying fairies.

Then he turned his wicked eyes to Jill and again told her to stop spinning. She spun the faster, but still so fine a thread that no one could see it and her spindle seemed hardly to get any fuller. The monstrous Dragon looked at her with his head on one side for a full minute, then suddenly turned his back upon her, whipped the end of his tail round her and lifted her up. He carried her to and fro, up and down dark passages and steep, winding stairways ; then crawled down dark shafts and up others with slimy, smelly walls ; up and down, round and round, climb up and slither down ; till at last our dear little Jill found herself all alone in a deep, dark dungeon with only one ray of light coming from the chink of a tiny brass-barred window, ever so far above her. There was only enough light to see that the walls were invisible—as General Leprecaun might say ! She was so giddy with the see-saw and round-about way they had traversed that she had to hold her head for some minutes before she could examine her prison. First she thought she had lost her spindle, her distaff, and

her two boxes, and then, for the first time, she felt afraid. She shouted at the top of her little voice for Jack, for Curdie, for Mr. S. Crow, for Smiling Mary, for Mother, Father, and me. The only response she got back was this :

“ Black Puss, Black Puss, now I think we’ve got her.”

“ Yea, Witch, your turn is come to pot her, pot her.”

“ Black Puss, Black Puss, I trust your claws to catch her.”

“ I only wish she’d try and run, *I’d scratch her, scratch her!*”

Jill says she couldn’t have kept not crying for another minute ; but that as soon as she heard her two enemies plotting again, she was too angry to cry and said to herself that, although she couldn’t spin, she’d say all the poetry she knew and then the multiplication table, so as to keep her eyes dry. She hadn’t got far into four times and was going slow because she was getting so near to four times nine—which she hated most of all because it never *would* be remembered!—when she saw something shining a little way off. She reached out to it and found it was her distaff. The moment she took it in her hand the whole place was dimly lit. She saw the grey walls, little mosses and ferns growing in the crevices between the great stones. The dungeon was square, the floor soft and mossy. In one corner there was a running stream of pure water. Jill put her mouth to it and found it sweet and most refreshing. Then she saw the bundle of her clothes which she must have picked up when the Dragon seized her : she dressed quickly over her nightgown. As soon as she felt she was tidy, she felt better still, and then heard the Witch and Black Puss talking secrets.

“ She don’t know what she ought to say to it, does she ? ” asked the Witch.

"Not she!" said the other with a spit; "she's as stupid as a Tom cat."

"Tell me the words again. We might want them," said the Witch.

"Give me the point of your ear in my claws, old Witch, and I'll tell you fine," said Black Puss in no kind voice.

The Witch must have been so anxious to have her memory refreshed that she agreed.

"Gently, Black Puss, please, with those dainty claws! Oh! oh!"

Black Puss then hissed this rhyme:

"Look into my fleecy tree,  
Twist me, turn me, twice and thrice:  
Think then where your heart would be:  
Hist! you're there in half a trice."

"Hope she didn't hear!" said the Witch.

"If she's too stupid to remember what four times nine is, she'll never remember *that* poem," said Black Puss.

"I've forgot it again," presently said the Witch. "Tell me once more, Black Puss."

But all Black Puss said was:

"Four times nine, the moon doth shine,  
Four times four 'tis forty,  
Four times eleven is sixty-seven,  
And four times nought is naughty."

Then they were gone.

Jill took her distaff, turned it twice and thrice, repeated the rhyme, and wished for her spindle. Looking deep into the silvery fleece, she saw the keep and crying fairies before her, and the Dragon slowly reaching out one claw to seize

the spindle, but as if afraid to touch it. Jill picked it up quickly and was instantly back in the dungeon, but with the dear spindle safe in her hands. She did the same thing again, but this time wishing for her two boxes. Again she succeeded in finding them and getting them beside her in the dungeon. Then she started spinning, and went on doing it for hours, though so fine was the thread that the spindle never got too full ; nor did the fleece seem to diminish.

## CHAPTER XX

### LADY JILL CUTS THE DRAGON'S CLAWS

SITTING on the ground alone, with only her distaff and the little stream of water to soften the gloom of her dungeon, Jill had many things to think about. Spinning and spinning—the gentlest work ever given girl or woman to do—makes us all think a lot. Kit says boys wouldn't be so headstrong and mischief-loving if they had some work like it ; yet he says I spin the best jokes when my wheel is going fastest. Mother is the finest spinner I ever saw, and certainly she is the wisest and lovingest and merriest mother in all the world. So it is not much wonder that Jill spun thinkings as fast as her thread, even though her distaff of think-wool must have been replenished from fleeces of all the sheep and goats, dragons and witches, scarecrows and black cats, she ever knew. The thinking she spun most was, of course, all about Jack and the Dragon. She was such a tender-hearted little woman that she never could bear even the thought of fighting. The question of right and wrong did not appear to her to be the most important. All fighting, she seemed to think, must be in some ways wrong, if only because one of the two enemies must get hurt ; and her sympathies were never safely enlisted on either side till a fight was over ; and then they were always with the vanquished. So you can imagine that just now her thoughtspinning was hard enough : the fleece, as it were, had not

been properly scoured and carded before it was tied on to her distaff. Of course in the great duel that was to come she wanted Jack to win—was he not half the world to her ? Of course somebody had got to kill the Dragon because it was bad. Of course she would have let the monster bite off her own arms and legs, one by one and piece by piece, rather than that Jack should be beaten. Yet, for the very reason that she somehow felt sure he would win, she could not help being just a tiny bit sorry for the Dragon. Perhaps too he was born with a black heart—she was sure the witch was!—and in that case nothing was quite his own fault. She tells me it was when she saw he was afraid of her spindle that she felt “the first sorry.” I think it must have made her feel that, in spite of size and weight and long tail and scaly skin and sharp claws, the Dragon was really, if a spindle could frighten him, a very pitiable monster !

You must not think Jill was a coward. Once she had got terribly scratched in trying to separate a dog and a cat ; and another time she was badly bitten on her thumb in making a ferret leave go of her white rabbit’s neck. No : she was the pluckiest little girl always, but hated fights.

So it is not surprising that Jill now began to wonder if there might not be a chance of preventing this coming fight. There could be only one possible way, she knew ; and that would be if the Dragon got sorry for the crying fairies, and she could make him promise to drink no more tears and eat no more salt fishes. The more she thought of this, the more she felt sure she ought to try and make him see how wrong and unkind his conduct was. The Dragon, she was sure, had been rather kinder to her than to the others ; even though he put her in prison, he had not really made her cry. Some-



SCISSORS AND CLAWS



how, she said, she was not quite so much afraid of the Dragon as of the Witch and Black Puss. I asked her why this was. She said she supposed "the Witch was rather like a woman and so must be wickeder than the Dragon what was only like a six-legged lizard growed enormous ; and Black Puss," she said, "knew she *ought* to be soft and cuddly. The Dragon thought *his* claws were to make nice fairies into scarecrows, but Black Puss *knowed hers* were given her to hide away, except when she'd got to catch rats and things."

The long and short of all this spinning and thinking was that Jill determined, and in spite of much dread and horror, to transport herself, by her distaff's help, to the castle courtyard. But, though she did exactly what was required, the magic would not work. She soon understood why this was. It was quite impossible for her to "think then where your heart would be," seeing that in her heart of hearts she had no strong desire for the reptile's company. Besides, she remembered that, even though she could, by the distaff's magic, go and fetch things, it was not her full body that went, and that she would be able neither to stay nor to talk. Nevertheless, though it was impossible for her to transport herself, her talking with the distaff could not be without effect of some sort : in fact it worked upon the Dragon himself, who soon came thundering, wheezing, and flopping down the dark, narrow passages, nearer, nearer, nearer, till he burst open the door and put his ugly maw through. Though he must have made himself much smaller to get down the narrow passages, the doorway, fortunately for Jill, was still too small to let the head in easily. But the nostrils poured smoke and flames into the dungeon, and he just got one paw in at a time. Jill, hearing a great flutter

above her, looked up and saw Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Fanny flying round and round making a whirlwind that drew up and out of the little window all the smoke and flames in a spiral current. This kept the child out of danger and so allowed her to converse with her guest.

"Here's something for you to eat, Lady Jill," the creature said, very indistinctly, "if you eat it, I'll take you out of prison—catch!" and he took an onion out of his mouth with his paw, smelt it all over, broke it into pieces with his teeth, and then threw them together into her lap. The onion smelled so stinkingly strong in the close, hot dungeon that it was as much as Jill could do not to let her eyes weep. But, before they were even very red, down swooped Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Fanny, and between them carried away every bit of the smelly thing.

Then the Dragon threw a pawful of red and white and black pepper and yellow mustard powder at her. But at that very moment Jill was looking into her distaff and turning it twice and thrice, so that it caught all the dust that was to have made her sneeze and cry. So *that* danger was soon over too.

But now Jill began to feel dreadfully afraid, because she realized what a black heart the creature must have and that he might crush her in one moment and eat her in the next if she did not assert every inch of authority. She says she felt like her teacher at school when, one day, the boys were all naughty and persisted in doing all their sums wrong and said the multiplication table upside-down and began to throw paper pills sopped in ink against the walls and at each other. The teacher knew that her only chance of overcoming the disorder was to draw herself up very stiff and proud and pretend she wasn't a bit afraid and talk to them

severely. So Jill tried to copy her, though her insubordinate class consisted of only one.

"Now you've had your way, Mr. Dragon," Jill said, standing up very stiff and proud, and using her spindle like a ruler to emphasize her remarks ; "now I am going to have mine. I am going to tell you something for your good. First you've *got* to have your claws cut ; second you've *got* to promise not to make good little fairies cry ; third you've *got* to take the pledge—I don't think it tastes *very* bad !—and give up drinking tears and eating little salt fishes. How would you like to be a little salt fish, pray ? If you will promise and vow these three things in the Queen's name—though they aren't quite the same as in *our* catechism—I'll ask Sir Jack not to champ you very hard, and then perhaps you'll make it up and you can come home with us perhaps, if you like, and my father and the boys will give you a shake-down in the barn, perhaps : you're too big for the pigsty—much—though, unless you renounce those things that I tell, it's where you ought to go."

But the Dragon, Jill says, just sneered at her kind words, and said he'd renounce them all when he had picked the Champion's bones clean. He said Jack was an interfering little boy only playing at being brave, and she'd soon be sorry she ever had such a twin-brother.

"Very well, then," said Jill, "you have sown your own bed and must reap it. I *was* going to teach you a little hymn, but it would be *no* use."

All this time the school of one seemed, for a dragon, to be listening very attentively, but was persistently trying to get his crocodile head right through the door. At last he found that by turning it quite on one side he could just manage it. Then a good lot of his body came after, particularly his two

fore-legs. Jill's pretend braveness, she says, was getting thin now, though she saw he was still afraid of her spindle. His next words relieved her very much.

"Oh, well, Lady Jill, as I don't like to disappoint a real lady," he said, slowly winking out some crocodile tears from one bleary eye, "you shall cut my claws, if you will be so very kind."

"That I will," said Jill, with her schoolmistress air, and getting her scissors out of her box; "then if you're a good child and are very attentive while I cut, I will teach you a poem."

The Dragon held up one paw and the cutting began, though Jill says it must have been terrible unhealthy to touch the scaly skin.

"Now," said Jill, "repeat each line after me.

"Let dogs delight to bark and bite—  
They love to have it so ;  
Let bears delight to growl and fight,  
For 'tis their nature to."

The Dragon repeated every line quite perfectly as the sharp point of each claw fell with a tinkle. Then said Jill :

"Now repeat all four lines correctly, and I'll teach you another."

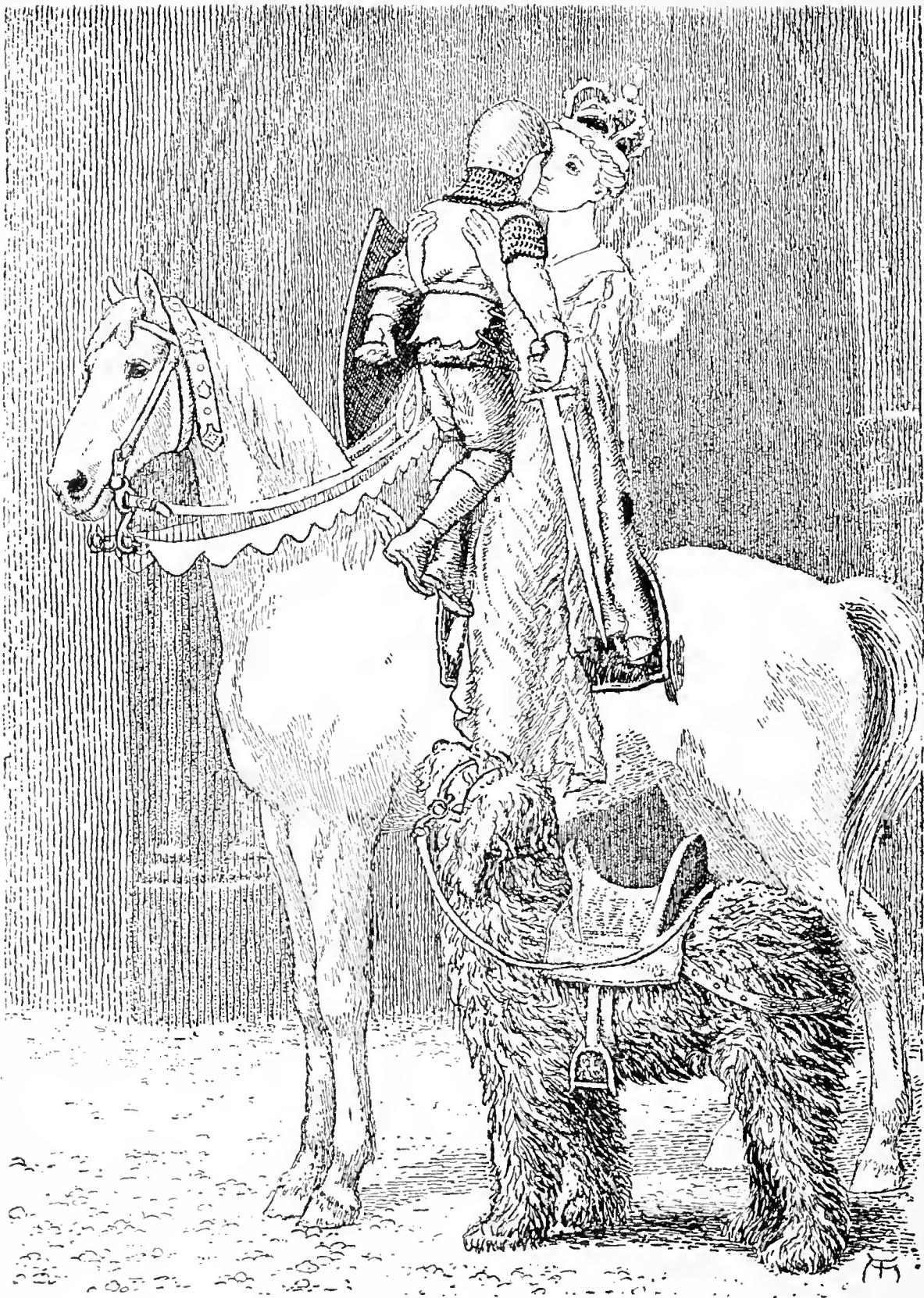
But he rattled them out so fast and angrily that they came this way :

"Let *me* delight small boys to bite ;  
Their bones and brains I chew,  
And girls affright, *their* tears, all night,  
I drink, a briny brew !"

He recited this very impertinently, his voice rising higher and higher ; and at the last word he slapped Jill on the face

and set the three claws of his other fore-paw in her frock, tearing it into tatters. Jill, quick as thought, dropped her scissors, picked up her spindle again and set it twirling on its hanging thread. This so terrified the monster that he wriggled back through the door, just as if, Jill says, his tail was pulling him back. As his head squeezed through, leaving a lot of scales behind, Jill told him she was afraid he was "a disgrace and incoggitible," and she must leave him to the Champion. She spun so swiftly then, that the head suddenly vanished and she heard him running away backwards as fast as he could.

Then she set to work with needle and thread upon her frock. For some reason she would not use her magic stitchwort upon her own clothes, though it would have done the mending better ; but she still felt so angry with the stinging slap on her face that she could not do her best sewing. She did hope Mother and I would not think she had been a careless little girl. When she put the last stitch into the third tear, the sting on her face was nearly gone and she began to feel a little bit forgiving, though at the same time she was more reconciled to the thought of Jack champing him fine. Yet, in spite of everything, she was still inclined to think that there must be something white in his black heart, or he would not have let her begin to cut his claws. But Kit and I have our doubts : perhaps it was only to ensure her not using her spindle while he hurt her that he pretended to be so meek !



JACK AND THE QUEEN

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE FIRST ROUND

NOW I must tell about Jack, who had been busy enough all this time.

As soon as his solitary breakfast was over—and he was very hungry, you may be sure, after his long vigil—Jack set to work polishing Curdie's bit and curb-chain, the silver mountings on the war-saddle and the bosses on the breeching, the buckles and stirrup-irons. He used wood ashes. Then Curdie came and rang the Champion's bell. Jack found him ready to be saddled and most beautifully groomed, his coat soft and silvery, and his ruff shining bright. Bridle and martingale, saddle-cloth and saddle were soon upon him. Then Jack donned his chain armour and surcoat, put his helmet on, took his shield, and swung into the saddle. As he rode down the little garden he turned for a last look at the cottage. Jill's bell had disappeared. Where the cord had hung was written, "*Lady Jillie gone away.*" His own bell-rope vanished as he looked. Then he saw that the cottage was hidden in the great shining Cathedral built all of cloudy white crystal, its spires dazzling with the light of the sun-stars, and almost too beautiful to look upon. He turned from it again, and there before him was the Fairy Queen. She was mounted upon a great white horse, who stood stock-still with head erect and gentle, brown eyes, with legs set as if ready to spring or fly, and

with long, sweeping tail blowing about in the wind. The Queen was holding across the saddle-bow a long, straight sword with a silver hilt like a cross, and studded with great carbuncles and pearls. Its scabbard was white as snow, and no one could ever say what it was made of. The Queen drew the sword and raised its flashing blade. So bright was it that for one moment it seemed to Jack, as he quickly dismounted and dropped on to one knee at her stirrup, that the stars and Cathedral spires lost their brightness and the whole town of Belmarket vanished, leaving instead the wide, grassy downs with a flock of Father's sheep scampering towards him and ringing their bells. But the vision was only a moment's. It was the Cathedral's bells that rang a pæan of joy and hope. He felt and heard the great sword touch his helmet, and he lowered his head before the mighty Queen, and heard her words.

"Arise, Boy-Champion! Arise, little Sir Jack! You will now be brave and do my work. Go and first ask pardon of Jillie, and then deliver my little children fairies! Go to do a great deed or die gloriously! Here is your puissant sword. It is blessed. Whatever happens, whether you overcome the Dragon or die, it is yours for evermore!"

These words, which might have thrilled the heart of St. George himself, made Jack feel very brave and strong to do big things; but they also made him feel how much he wanted the great Queen to kiss him. So she took him for one moment into her strong, motherly arms, lifted him right up to her horse's head, kissed him on the forehead and mouth and then on his two eyes, and set him down again.

The Queen was gone, and Jack was left standing in the market-place, his great sword in his two arms and Curdie beside him. His army, commanded by the High Constable,

was marching towards him in perfect order. Every man of that mighty host was armed in a leather jerkin protected by lozenge-shaped silver plates sewn on—*mascel* armour it is called. Each carried a leather buckler with silver bosses, and a great bow, with a quiverful of arrows, long-feathered and sharp-steeled, slung across his shoulders. Short axes hung from their belts, and some had a horn also. No greetings were exchanged. Jack fastened the sword to his belt and hooked his shield on to the saddle-bow as the Master Smith faced about and stood at his side before the army. Somehow Jack knew what was expected of him.

“ My brave Army ! ” he shouted, “ the day of our trial is come. Man ye the walls, while I ride forth alone. I am come even now from audience with our Queen, and this is her will. She has given me my puissant sword wherewith I must overcome or die. Man ye the walls ! Let every gentle stand shoulder to shoulder with shaft ready nocked in his bow-string. Then when I am gotten forth the gates, let me hear your *God-speed* in one twang of your five-and-twenty strings, one rush of your long arrows, one thud of their steel in the enemy’s glittering hide. For yonder ye see him lie, drinking before ye. And I would have his anger aflame—your arrows can no more—ere I and my noble charger beard him in his fortress. So help us, mighty Queen ! ”

Jack drew his sword, pointed it aloft, kissed its fiery hilt, embraced the Master Smith, pulled round his charger, and started off for the gates. But he suddenly drew up and turned back to the Smith, saying :

“ One word in thine ear, I prithee, High Constable.” They withdrew out of earshot, and Jack leaned over to his strong friend, who, you remember, was not quite so tall as

himself. “Our faithful servitors, Mistress Nanny and her foster-child, Streaky,” said Jack, “will, I wis, be looking to break their fast. Prithee take this care upon thyself and hie thee to the cottage. Tell them of the Lady Jill’s and little Jack’s undying love, and give them one armful of sweet hay and a carrot withal. I trust thee, High Constable, for thy love’s sake, to fulfil this my last behest—that these dumb creatures starve not, and that Nanny be milked before breakfast and tea every day until one or both of us shall return !”

The Master Smith lifted his great hand, put it over Jack’s little chubby one that rested upon the sword’s hilt now sheathed, and swore a mighty oath that Nanny and Streaky should not starve. Then the Champion wheeled about and was gone.

“Right about face ! Quick march !” were the last words he heard in Belmarket. They were followed by the *tramp*, *tramp* of the army as they ascended the walls by its many stairways and took up their stations. The Trolls flung open the wide gates, bowed their bearded heads to the very ground, and shouted, as he passed beneath the portcullis and over the drawbridge, “Hail ! Champion of the Queen ! Hail !”

Then came his *God-speed* in the strangest sound—the harsh, discordant twang of five-and-twenty leaping bowstrings, and the instant flying past him of five-and-twenty steel-shod, gay-winged arrows. Almost instantly up rose the monstrous Dragon. He rose and swelled and rose until he stood up on the hindmost two of his six legs, so that his head was as high as the windows of his tower-keep. Jack every moment saw him more plainly, saw the arrows sticking out of his hide, saw the weeping fairy maidens at



THE GATHERING OF THE TROLLS

their windows, saw the Witch's timid, white face peeping over the tower's battlements, while Black Puss slowly, contemptuously marched round, stepping gingerly over the embrasures. The Dragon opened his mouth. He bellowed and roared and then hissed forth flames so dark and red and smoky that, for a moment, they darkened the heather and gorse clad common across which the Champion rode at the speed of fury. Jack says the sight of the monster and the thought of Jillie in his power made him feel so full of anger that there was no room left for afraid. They rushed straight towards the brazen castle as though they were on wings, rushed straight towards the only gate. But while still two hundred yards or more away, the Dragon again belched forth his red flames, but this time over the purple heather and yellow gorse, so that instantly they were all ablaze. In a moment more the smoke had so blinded Jack and Curdie that the castle was hidden. Jack reined Curdie in. Quick as the one thought that seemed to animate knight and charger at once, they seized the opportunity of the hiding smoke. They had together realized that the gateway was too strongly guarded by the Dragon himself to make it possible to gain admission there. So under cover of the smoke they now rode at right angles, intending a flank attack and trusting to Curdie's great leaping powers for entrance. Now it was that Curdie's superiority over an ordinary champion's steed was manifested. No pounding of hoofs in the terrific gallop that followed could be heard in the castle. The dog's feet made no noise, and the altered point of attack was not discovered. The danger from the pursuing flames was great, but they rode the faster, and though the red tongues fast swallowed up the heather, Jack and Curdie were presently clear of the smoke. But they

were exhausted with the heat, and Curdie's coat was a little singed. Dismounting in a little hollow by a bubbling spring, they drank deeply. No sooner had they risen refreshed than they heard the roar of the fire come nearer, and then saw the flames above them. Knowing in another minute they would be surrounded by a destroying furnace, Jack drew his sword and cut down the burning heather at such a furious rate that presently the danger was checked. Mounting Curdie once more, Jack rode on. In another ten minutes they were quietly reconnoitring beneath the brazen walls unseen by the enemy. The walls looked impregnable ; they were fully twelve feet high, and bristling with spikes all the way up.

"Sir Jack," said Curdie, "without you on my back I can leap over, I think. With you, I should be sure to leap short, and then those spikes on the walls would catch us. Shall I go first and reconnoitre, and leap back again directly ?"

To this Jack agreed, and in a flash his brave charger was over. Jack strode up and down patiently—no easy thing to do when he was fretting to get at his enemy. He waited so long that he felt sure Curdie could not get back again. The latter was far too wise and wary a dog to bark any advice, lest he give news to the Dragon of their whereabouts. There seemed to be no other way : Jack must climb over by those very spikes that were set to prevent anybody doing such a thing. But the moment he set his foot upon one and his hand on another above him, both gave way and let him fall. He tried again and again with no better result. Then he sat down to examine the walls, and presently exclaimed, "I know !" for he saw that wherever a spike was bent under his weight, the brazen plate to which it was welded

had separated a little from the next plates. He then inserted the blade of his jack-knife between the plates and found that with a little persuasion they came away and could be stripped off the wall beneath. Then, finding the walls were only soft clay, with knife and hands Jack soon cleared a hole big enough to creep through.

At once he knew why Curdie had not returned to him : the ground within was many feet below the outer level and Curdie could not leap back again. Cutting steps in the clay, Jack descended and joined his charger. They stood in a narrow path with damp clay walls on each side. The path was slippery with huge fish-like scales, silvery-green. Here and there in the inner wall was a little round tower with a pointed roof and one lancet window in it. As they rode past one of these Curdie pricked up his ears and stood. Jack listened too. In the far, far away deeps he heard the faintest whisper-song, sounding just a little bit as though it might be Jillie's voice :

“ Look into my fleecy tree,  
Twist me, turn me, twice and thrice :  
Think then where your heart would be :  
Hist ! you're there in half a trice ! ”

Then there came a great roar, and a red flame shot up into the sky, darkening everything. Yet at that very moment there sped out of the lancet window a white pigeon—he left sure it was Matthew—with a letter under her wing. Jack, moreover, felt sure that, as the bird flew up against the black smoke which rolled and curled all round the flame, he could see that it was carrying in its beak a silvery thread as fine as a spider's spinning. What this could be the Champion could not guess ; but he knew the pigeon came from

Jill, that she was in a deep dungeon, and, because of the singing and the letter, that she could not be ill or dying.

But he felt angrier and angrier : the flame and smoke made him, he says. I am sure his chubby face was itself all aflame, as I have seen it now and again when telling of some unkindness he had witnessed at school or elsewhere.

Jack mounted. For a moment he put his mouth to the window, and shouted in a whisper,

“It’s me, Jillie! and I want to say something *very* particler, but mustn’t wait!”

Then he trotted off along the narrow, winding pathway. Soon Curdie began twitching his nostrils and sniffing the air.

“We shall find him, Master Champion,” he whispered, “round the next bend, I think. It must lead direct into the courtyard.”

“I can hear the little fairies crying,” said Jack, as he reined in Curdie with his left hand. Then he took his shield on his left arm and drew with a sharp *whish* his puissant sword.

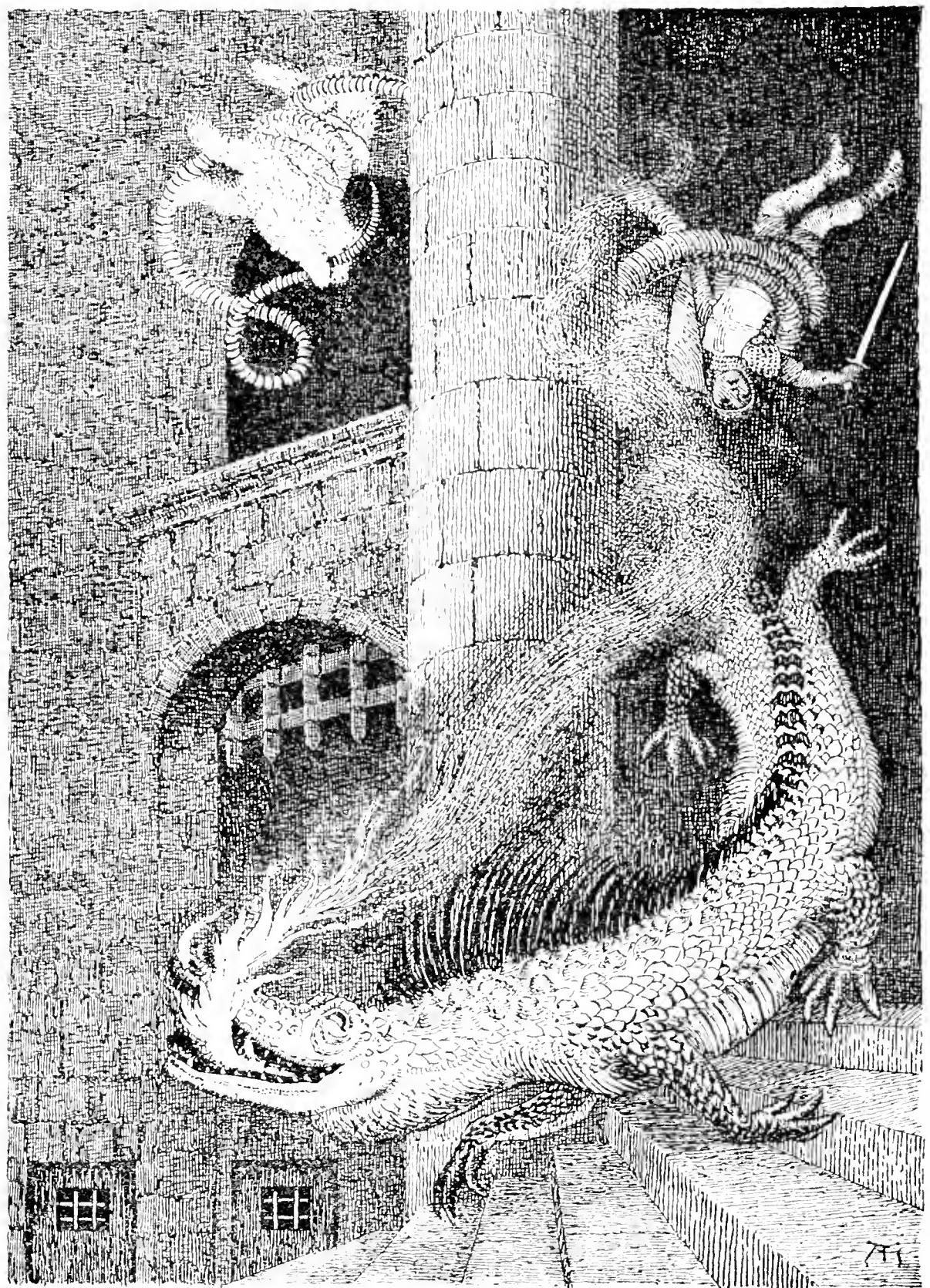
“Keep a good grip with your knees, Sir Jack ; I may have to leap over him without waiting for orders. *Fierce and wary* is the word. And remember his black heart !”

“Good, brave Curdie !” said Jack, standing up in his stirrups, patting him on the neck, and giving him the rein. “Now !”

With a leap and rush they galloped round the corner. There was the Dragon rearing on his hindmost legs towering quite twenty feet above them, and exposing his pinky-white throat. They rushed in and Jack actually got a fine thrust in with his sword below his middle near leg. The Dragon roared and thought to crush them by dropping his full

weight upon them, but Curdie was too quick, and leaped to one side. Here, however, the tower was in the way, and consequently, to avoid the monster's attack where they would be hemmed in, Curdie had to leap right over the Dragon's back. The little fairies in their windows stopped crying and clapped their hands ; the gargoyle stopped splashing the tears into the pool before which the fight was raging, and a little stream of Dragon's blood was trickling away. Curdie alighting softly on his feet, they wheeled about. The Dragon's black tongue darted out and gave a great slap which, though Jack caught it on his shield, nearly dismounted him. But before the Dragon could pull back its tongue, Jack's sword had cut off one yard and six inches of it, and with such a dash that it flew off and fell with a great splash into the pool. Then the little fairies plucked up more courage and cheered aloud.

All would now have gone well but for the Dragon's tail, which had more sense and agility in it than his head and tongue together. Neither Curdie nor Jack had calculated upon its dangers. Resting a moment, and with their eyes alert for the enemy's next move—which moment seemed to be entirely taken up with its own groans and bellowings—they were caught unprepared. The agile tail, with a tight, hard knot in it, suddenly whipped round and flung them both to the ground. Curdie without his rider, Jack without his steed. Both lay still and seemingly lifeless, though the Dragon might have noticed that the Champion still gripped his sword tightly, and his steed had one ear cocked. The fairies began to weep again, and the monster broke into hideous, dragonish laughter, making the air hot and sultry with his mocking breath. The Witch and Black Puss crept out of the door behind the keep. The Witch gave Jack a



ALAS !

great kick with one cloven hoof, and Puss was just going to get a good scratch at Curdie's eyes when he growled. The wicked animal leapt terrified on to her mistress's shoulder.

Then all was still. The Dragon unknotted its tail, picked up Jack and Curdie together, but each in a separate twist of it, and carried them by winding ways up and down, darker and deeper, dropping them at last into separate dungeons ; and there they lay still.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE ESCAPE FROM THE DUNGEON

I OFTEN wonder which of the Twins had the harder work to do for their Queen. I wonder which would have been the more useful all alone. I wonder whose name should come first. I don't wonder which we love better, because, if we try to decide such a point, there is nothing left us but the Twins' own sublime superiority to comparisons, and to say "We love both best!"

Jack had the harder bodily work to do ; Jill, I think, had the harder spiritual. He had to be brave, she, to be patient. Doing things is so much easier than being patient, Mother says. In one word Jack had to kill a dragon, Jill to spin a thread. He had to destroy something big, she to make something fine and strong : the Dragon was in the way, the thread was to make the way—as you shall hear. Perhaps Jill's task was easier because she had got her distaff and ladyhood before Jack had won his sword and knighthood. Anyhow they were rather wonderful children, and neither could have helped the Queen and delivered Belmarket from its tyrant without the other.

All through the fight Jill spun and spun and spun in her cold dungeon. She had had no food to eat since tea-time the day before ; but the sweet stream of water sustained

her. She never ceased spinning except when she wrote a letter home or spoke the magic rhyme to her distaff. To keep her in good heart there was not only her work, but the whole time there sat within the little window, so high above that she could only just see her, one or two or sometimes all five of Kit's pigeons, cooing away so sweetly that the mere closing of her eyes made her feel at home again. She thought they were watching her spin, particularly whenever the thread broke and had to be mended. With her distaff's help, however, she often took peeps at us all, she says, and so knew how anxiously we were all looking for our Jack and Jill's home-coming.

Very few sounds reached her. One moment she thought she heard Jack and Curdie talking together far away, and then, for one moment, she plainly heard Jack's whisper. She heard the *whish* of his sword as he drew it, and soon after heard thundering and leaping sounds that let her know the fight was begun. Then, with her distaff's help, she got a few disjointed moments' glimpses of the great ordeal. She saw Jack's splendid sword-work and even heard the splash of the Dragon's tongue in the pool. She saw yet again the Champion on his charger lying as if dead ; and she heard the green monster's mocking laughter. Then a terrible fear came upon her ; but when she next saw Jack and Curdie lying each in a separate dungeon, she knew her time to help was come.

But the tragic visions would have been almost past bearing, had not the peaceful orchard at home come somehow into her mind at that very moment. Still wondering how it would be possible to help, she happened to look into her fleecy tree and, without any definite intention, repeated once more the rhyme. She found herself looking

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up into Smiling Mary's leafless boughs and heard her singing :

“ When love pines in dungeon deep,  
Raise thy hands above thy fear—  
Help is thine, for help is near :  
Though the anguish makes thee weep,  
Comes new strength thy love to keep !

“ Though the weaker in the fray,  
Jack still holds his puissant sword,  
Captive to his plighted word :  
Fighting will the Champion pray,  
Fighting will he win the day.

“ Jill, thy brother's heart has bled  
More than limb or wounded head ;  
When his tears, like cleansing rain,  
Come and come, then cure the pain,  
Jack will laugh in Dragon's stead.”

As soon as the singing ceased Jill found the dungeon walls were all round her once more ; but she knew what must be done. She took her work-box, turned her distaff twice and thrice, looked deep again into its silvery tree, and wished from her heart to be with Jack. So powerfully did the magic work this time, because, I suppose, her desire was greater than for anything she had thought of before, that one wall of her dungeon crumbled to pieces and she was able to walk over its heap of slippery clay direct into the adjoining dungeon. There lay Jack on the floor : in another moment she was kneeling beside him. He was flat on his back, his head resting on his shield ; his hands were clasped across his chest, both gripping the shining hilt of his sword ; its

blade lay straight between his legs. His face was white, his eyes closed, and there was an ugly cut across his forehead. Jill quickly had her stitchwort lying on the wound and its needle flashing like glow-worm lighting. The colour came back to his lips and cheeks, the sewing ceased, and the wound could be seen no more. The Champion rubbed his fists into his eyes and smiled as he always does on the point of waking. Jill lifted the great sword. He then saw her, forgot everything but that the wrong he had done her was not yet wiped out.

“ Jillie, darling Jillie, oh, I’m a bad little boy. Please forgive me ! And oh, my heart is bleeding ! ” he cried, and burst out crying and sobbing. Jill, you may be sure, had her arms round him doing stitchwort’s work upon his sore heart. As soon as it was nearly mended—and how quickly a little child’s wrongdoings are forgiven and forgotten ! —Jack cried out again, “ But oh, Jillie, do you know, I’m disgraced and I’m beaten ! And what’s come of Curdie ? ”

Jill soon made him understand that he had had only his first round, and that Curdie or the Queen would be sure to find some way of letting him get at the enemy again. “ As for Curdie,” she said, “ please, excuse me for a minute, and I’ll find out. Hold my hand tight, and perhaps you can come too.” Then she looked up into the fleecy tree—but this time with some dismay, because she saw there was very little wool left upon it. She was using it up, she realized, not with spinning, but with transporting herself to and fro. However, she must not think of economy, but only of the thing she had to do, even if it used her last wisp of fleece. So she repeated the magic rhyme—and, as it proved, for the last time :

“Look into my fleecy tree,  
Twist me, turn me, twice and thrice:  
Think, then, where your heart would be:  
Hist! you’re there in half a trice!”

Another wall then crumbled away and the Twins, climbing over the fallen rubbish, found themselves standing beside the brave dog. He lay on his side quite still. Quickly they had his war-saddle and harness off. Jill took Jack’s helmet back into her own dungeon, filled it at the little spring, and brought it again to Curdie. They lifted his head and poured the sweet water gently into his mouth. Followed a plunge, a struggle, a leap: Curdie too was cured! Then they had some happy caressings and waggings and groomings with the hair-brush, which had been packed into the work-box. They harnessed the happy dog again and asked him what they could do next.

“Lady Jillie,” he asked, before advising, “have you spun many yards?”

“Oh, yes, Curdie,” she answered, “miles, I think, but I can’t imagine where it’s all gone to!”

“I know,” said Jack, “we saw Matthew carrying it off in her beak.”

“She must have carried one end of it home, then, and it’s unwound all the way along,” said Jill. “Kit’s homing pigeons don’t know any other way! If we could only see it, we could find the way home. Let’s write!”

Jill took her work-box, and while Jack cleaned and polished his sword and armour, and Curdie went to sleep to think things out, Jill wrote a letter to me. “Please, Trystie,” it said, “find the pigeon’s thread what I have spun. And come. We want you to bring Kit too, because the dragon is almost too big for Jack and Curdie, and I can’t

spin much more I don't think. Be quick, Trystie, be in a terrible hurry, please, quick, quick."

The letter showed her anxiety was greater than she would let Jack see. Mark had been poking her head in at the window and now flew down for the letter. But the distaff was empty. There was no more fleecy tree to look into. The spindle too was empty, but for a few inches of thread, with which Jill tied the letter under the bird's wing and then let her go. Because the distaff now had done feeding the spindle, its light and magic died away. They had now been in utter darkness but for a gleam of light from the little window, the faint phosphorescent sparkle in the little stream of water, and, most noticeable of all, the bright shine of a gossamer thread that ran from the middle of Jill's spindle straight up to the window.

The children looked at it with its light reflected from their own eyes. They could not know what it was for ; yet it made them feel wonderfully glad. Jill lifted it to her cheek and lips to feel its softness ; Jack put his hand on it, jerked it, and found it as strong and firm to pull upon as a great rope.

"Three cheers ! Jill," said Jack, with a happy shout, "I'm going to fight the old Dragon again. This dungeon is only clay, I know. We'll cut holes for our feet in the wall : and then we'll climb up the rope. You follow me : you can climb better 'an me, though you *are* a girl."

They both began cutting holes, he with his sword, she with his jack-knife. After waking Curdie, who had been watching them with one eye while the other slept, the ascent began. It took, they say, hours and hours, but they neither felt fatigue nor slipped once. They had not thought the dungeon was so deep.

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They squeezed through the little window at last, after tearing out its bars, and then stood upon the scaly path in full starshine. Jack then cut the window large enough and called to Curdie. The brave dog was already half-way up, holding to the silver thread with his teeth and hind-paws, while he clawed his way up with his fore-feet in the steps Jack had made. In a very few seconds he stood by their side and shook himself.



## CHAPTER XXIII

### HOW KIT AND TRYSTIE GOT INTO FAIRYLAND

YOU will remember the letter Jillie wrote me from her dungeon, and how she urged me to be "in a terrible hurry, quick, quick," and bring Kit to their succour. Well, either the pigeon Mark flew amazingly fast or the distance was nothing at all. It was impossible to decide which.

Sometimes I think the pigeons, to get from Belmarket to the Farm, had only to fly from one bough of Smiling Mary to another ; for, whether her tree was at the moment in our orchard or in Belmarket or in Raggaplas, it must have been exactly the same tree, and so deeply rooted in the ground that it couldn't have moved itself. It is puzzling but perhaps very simple.

Anyhow, Mark came tapping at my window before it was light that morning. I let her in and read the letter. I hurriedly dressed and went out, hoping to catch Kit. It was only half-past six, and the dawn was only beginning to clear away a white mist that had frosted the grass and the cobwebs. I found Kit had already yoked Sandiband and its brother and had started away to get a bit of ploughing done before breakfast. Meaning to run after him, though I was actually needed in the dairy, I went back through the orchard, just as the sun rose and caught Smiling Mary's top branches. She is the biggest and by far the tallest tree in the orchard. The sun's rays were very rosy and the tree was covered in hoar-frost. I had to stop and look at the pretty sight for a second, in spite of my anxiety about the Twins. That second made me take two more ; for I saw the most extraordinary amount of gossamer threads twisted all about the bare tree-top—such as I had never beheld unless on low-lying bracken, brambles, or gorse bushes. Then I saw all the threads were gathered together in a bunch on the trunk, just where the top branches start.

“ Why,” I exclaimed, “ she's turned herself into a regular distaff, the old dear—except that it's all a spun thread ! ”

True enough ! for my eyes followed one particularly shining thread, running round and along the sprawling branch, where it lost the sun's red light, but shone with a

pearly lustre. Then I knew it must be the magic thread Jill had been spinning and Matthew had brought home. Its twistings and windings ran spirally down the short, gnarled trunk, and I had to drop on my knees to see where it disappeared into the grass. I put my fingers upon it. It was firm, although so soft that I could hardly feel it, and so transparent that I could only just see it. I lifted and followed it, letting it run through my half-closed fingers. It led me across the Hither Garden, over the gate into the lane, where a morning breeze sprung up and lifted a big sycamore leaf, gold, red, and brown, running on its tips before me. It looked for one or two seconds like an elf turning somersaults ; and it rushed about in such absurd antics for a mere wind-tossed leaf that I felt sure I was going through the borderland of the magic and workaday worlds.

The thread took me straight to Kit's field. I saw him standing by the plough, his team hitched to ; but he looked as if he were putting on his shoes. Still holding my clue, I ran up to him. He did not hear me coming, as with eyes strangely set upon the Down's horizon, he called out to his cattle his cheery " gee-up-gee ! " just as though they were fellow-workers and friends.

But still he was looking into the far-away distance, and so intently that I had no choice but to follow his eyes. There, beyond the field, though whether beyond or among the Downs I cannot say, I saw a little walled town with a silvery river running round it, a high-arched bridge spanning the river, and twin cathedral spires shooting up into the blue sky. There were green hills and distant mountains around. On one near rocky hill was a yellow castle and a black cloud hanging over it. The vision faded away as I came up to



THE MAGIC CLUE

Kit and saw that his heavy boots hung on one of the plough's handles and that he was going bare-foot.

"Trystie, lass," he said, not a bit astonished to see me, "I found a pair of shining fairy shoes hanging on the plough, and had to put them on, and now I seem to have lost size and heaviness. It seems that there's a long journey before us. Are you coming too?"

"Yes, indeed," I said, and told him how I held a magic clue. He could not feel it, nor could I yet see his shoes, though neither of us doubted the other's word! Kit and I understand a lot of things we can't see with our workaday eyes or touch with our workaday hands: yet at times we do see and touch those very same things, both together.

With one hand on the plough-handle and the other holding the clue, I followed to the end of the uphill furrow. There, while Kit unyoked the oxen, and turned them into the adjoining meadow, I waited for him by the little stile leading on to those heavenly Downs. We always now call it the Magic Stile; for it leads direct into the land where all the time is wild thyme, and the only heavy weight is waiting for someone loved, and the only measures of size are the sighs of the ministering winds! A child again, Kit took my hand and I followed my clue. How long, how far, we had to go, neither of us can guess. Certainly we sped along the Milky Way, making for the great sun-star that surmounts the hill of those Fairy Downs up which we climbed. We had little to say, beyond what I told him of Jill's letter, and beyond his telling me how like the day was to one of those in the bygone years when I and Robin had rescued him from starvation.<sup>1</sup> That walk with Kit was wonderful—into the heart of the

<sup>1</sup> That story has been told by Father in the book he calls *Trystie's Quest*, after me.

ever-uprising Spring, always nearing the starry light whence hope and healing seem to flow. Then it was downhill again by the side of a headlong waterfall. Thence we looked into a deep valley with so dark a mist hanging over it that we could not see what sort of life was there. We passed a cottage with a quickset hedge. There my clue was broken. We went about searching, and lost some time. The cottage chimney began to smoke evilly and the smoke swept round us and sank down into the valley, making it still darker. At last we found entrance. Kit knocked, opened the door, and asked who lived there.

"Kind Mrs. Scaremonger," was the wheedling answer. "You must have come to find the Twins. You, Missie, are the very image of pretty little Jill—two eyes, one nose, one mouth, all exact ; and you, young sir, are as bold as little Jack. I have taken good care of them, fed and clothed them out of my own poor purse ; but I'm kind, I am, and I can't help it !"

Then she grinned, and I knew it was the Witch because of her sharp-pointed teeth. I told Kit, and at that minute Black Puss leaped from the smoking chimney-top. I pulled Kit aside just in time, and the great cat alighted at his feet with a dishful of soot. One terrific kick from his fairy shoes sent the bad thing whirling and wailing into the valley, where she was lost to sight in the black smoke. Then Kit turned to the Witch.

"The oven for you !" he said, "unless instantly you show us where you have hidden the end of the magic clue you've cut !"

But she dropped on all fours and began to kick stones and earth behind her with her cloven hoofs. Kit and I were pelted before we could get away. Kit gripped her by the

scruff of her neck ; but she slipped through his fingers. He made a grab at her petticoats ; but his hand gripped only a broomstick. In another moment this had slipped through his hands as well ; and with it, Witch, cottage, hedge, and chimney had disappeared, but left in his hand something which he gave to me. It was the end of the lost clue ! Kit could feel it now and I could see his shoes.

The clue, however, led us no longer downhill, but turned us up into the waterfall itself, so that we had business enough to keep hold of it and climb the rocks at the same time. When we reached what seemed the highest we could go, although we were but at the foot of a great waterfall and drenched with spray, who should step from behind the tumbling green curtain but General Leprecaun. He was not a day older or bigger than when he left me in the kitchen six years ago ;<sup>1</sup> and though he was a great General now, he talked to me just as he did before, only more respectfully—no, not that, only from a little further away. Yet most he said to me was by way of Kit.

“ Kit, me man,” he said, shaking his hand up and down, up and down, and looking straight into his eyes ; “ it’s meself would be a ploughman and leave me watery palaces—with their tumbling walls and shoot-up columns and the roof to them a merry-go-round, if it’s not tumbling about your feet—it’s leave them all, would I, if I might look upon that winsome face once every day when the sun rises. Kit, me man, it’s over three hundred years old is your true friend the Leprecaun ; and it’s a post of high honour he holds

<sup>1</sup> Father has, in the other story, told all about the Leprecaun—how he came to be in Sussex instead of Ireland, and how he led me to my fairy-godmother, the Queen, and how he brought us all home after terrible doings with the Pigwidgeons.

at Court ; and it's the Queen of the fairies, her blessed self, that he serves ; but, man alive ! it's Kit himself your friend the Ginaler would change places with, entirely ! ”

Then he turned on his heel and took us down and down and down a great spiral stairway, up and down which conflicting streams of water were rising and pouring.

“ It's Mother Earth's plenishings and drinkings. She gives and she takes. It's only a little fairy man that must give away all the strange heart of him and get nothing back at all, at all. But faith ! it's nothing else he could iver do wid that same heart. Niver before in all his three hundred years did he guess he had so onconvanient a thing in his keeping—not till he set eyes upon that same winsome face ; and 'tis the Queen's own truth I'll be telling ye.”

I don't think Kit knew what the dear fairy man was talking about. I think I did, but had nothing to say. Besides, the waters were so great, now still in moony wonder, now strong in rushing music, now terrific in fountains of flaming colour, that I could not have made myself heard. Besides, there was a bit of a lump in my throat ; and we had to go Indian-file, Kit being between me and my dear old friend. I wanted at least to tell him how happy I was to see him again. But he hurried us along, knowing our anxiety.

Presently we came to a side door. The Leprecaun opened it and we began an ascent up steps in a dry, hot rock, so steep that it was climbing hand and foot for us two thick ones, though the fairy man ran up so quickly before us that he disappeared. We soon reached the open air and stood on a rocky, parched mountain-side and looked down over great brass walls into the Dragon's castle. The terrific monster was lying on its long, flat stomach, its six legs and webby

feet sprawling out on each side, and its tongue, which looked as though it had been sliced off, trying to get far enough out of its mouth to reach a pool of water that went round the central keep. We saw little fairy children leaning out of the narrow windows in the tower and pitifully weeping streams of tears that ran into the pool.

While we were looking all over the place to see how we were to get in—for though Kit was unarmed he felt he must somehow get even with that frightful dragon, and I had no other thought than to follow Kit—we saw instantly that the need of us was imminent. The smoke cleared away as the dragon scrambled on to its feet, opened its huge jaws and bellowed forth roaring flames.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE SECOND ROUND

THE next thing happened with such rapidity that we actually saw some of the terrible fight as we hurriedly climbed down the steep rocks. Now Kit would see a bit of it, now I ; and we pieced them together with what Jillie told us, and with what we two saw of the end when we at last reached the courtyard of the castle.

When we first clearly saw the Dragon, it was sprawling lazily, and seemed to be thinking—perhaps, that its two little pests of enemies were safely caged. It had three sore places, one in its tongue, one under the middle near leg, and, because it was very much annoyed, one in its heart. It seems that its tongue had already begun to grow long again ; and it was now resting after a hundredth attempt to lap up the tear-water. It was just half-way through a deep, blue-flamed sigh, when, round from behind the keep, rode Jack, mounted on Curdie, with Jill holding on by the off stirrup.

In a moment the monster was on all-sixes ; a leap and rush forwards on Curdie's part left Jill behind. Jack threw his shield from him, and with drawn sword, his little face pale with purpose and his mouth set so strong that the red lips were not to be seen, stood up in his stirrups to parry a smashing blow from the enemy's right fore-paw. Although the Champion did this so cleverly that he cut off three claws with the one flash of his sword, both he and Curdie were flung

somersaulting right into the pool of tears—to the astonishment, I imagine, of the little salt fishes ; but we saw lying among the green scales on the ground three long, cruel claws with their scaly flesh and hanging together by a strip of the dragon-foot's web. Thereafter the monster—already a little lame from Jack's thrust inside the middle near leg during the first round—went on five legs only ; and, until Curdie and Jack were ready again, it rocked and nursed the wounded paw in its moaning mouth. Jack, even with sword in hand, could swim nearly as well as Curdie ; and, but for the salt water making their eyes as red as those that had shed it, neither was any the worse for the ducking. Mounting instantly, and seizing the moment when the Dragon lifted its head to roar again, Curdie, obeying Jack's light jerk on the bridle, gave one of his finest straight-up leaps and the Champion buried his sword deep in the flabby pink flesh under its jaw. Then we clearly saw that the sword had transfixed the reptile's flat muzzle in such way that the point stuck out at one of its nostrils. But at the same moment the Dragon gave its head a side wrench, and Jack was flung out of the saddle and thrown heavily on the ground by Jill's side. But the sword remained where the boy had thrust it : it was pinned through jaw, tongue, nose, and with the wounded paw sandwiched between. Curdie by the same wrench of the monster's head was flung high into the air and right over the walls, where he fell like one dead close by where Kit and I now stood, in anguish because we could find no way to get inside the castle, even though I could see Jill's clue running right through the walls. I was at Curdie's side in a moment. He was only stunned ; and as soon as he felt my hand on him, he opened one eye, cocked one ear, gave me half a smile, and said :

"The brass walls are all sham : go through where Lady Jill's clue goes, Miss Trystie ! I'll follow in half a trice."

Kit heard too. In another minute he had torn down the brass plates and found that here the walls were only ashes and dragon-scales, so that they fell down and left a great gap. Curdie took the lead, but limped badly, and soon had us in the courtyard. There we found Jill with Jack's head in her lap, busy with her stitchwort ; for his arm and shoulder looked all crooked—were, in fact, dislocated and broken too perhaps. The Dragon lay on its back kicking and uttering smothered and smoky roars through its nostrils, in an agony beating its muzzle on the ground to force out the sword. For the moment the enemy was safe.

"Oh, Trystie, darling Trystie," said Jill, but, like a good nurse, not moving, "I'm so glad you've come. It's the awfulest fight in the world, and Jack's a terror, he's so brave. Please, I know the danger's terrible, but, please, please, Kit, I think Jack *must* finish the fight himself. I think he'd rather be killed untarnished than let anybody else save him. Please, it's *his* Dragon, and he'll do for it fine, I know!"

Kit and I understood, though Kit says he never in all his life felt a responsibility so dreadful. It would, of course, have been so much easier for him to die for his little brother than to look on and see him flung about and wounded and torn. Still he and I both understood that when child or man has to do some big thing for the Queen, it cannot be done right by anybody else. We knew too that everyone had better fail in the trying than be spared the trying.

So until Jack should be well again—and his arm was fast getting back into shape and place—we knew we were safe—at any rate as long as the puissant sword should hold.

As Jill nursed and healed her twin-brother, I could not but see what a little woman she had grown and how splendidly she had risen to these great demands upon her. Not the less, also, did I wonder, as I looked at Jack's unconscious little head lying in her lap, that our chubby little brother should have such a mighty task put upon him. [Such a little boy, such a little girl, to be doing the very work that Saint George and Saint Florence Nightingale faced and fought Death to do !

But now the colour was fast coming back to Jack's face. He sat up, yawned, stretched himself, looked round, just said, "I know!" and jumped upon his feet. He gave us his sunny smile and said in his quaint, short way :

"Kisses to-morrow—Dragons to-day! How's mother, Trystie? Kit, you're the broth of a boy to leave the beast to me! I'll get my puissant sword again and champ him, I will. If he knocks it out himself I shan't have a chance! Curdie, are you ready?"

But Curdie had fallen over on his side : the pain he had been ignoring now mastered him, and Jill had to get her stitchwort to work upon his poor bruised back and legs. Yet the Dragon, by persistent bangings on its snout, was loosening the sword. The hilt had already slipped and fallen backwards, so that the sore-wounded reptile could almost grip it with its off hindmost leg, though it had to curl up, like the worm it was, to get near. It was quite clear that Jack, if he was to recover his only chance of slaying the creature, must not wait for his charger. He picked up his shield again, seeing he would need it to protect him from the flames. Then, with teeth and lips tight set, and quite pale again with firm fury, he rushed forwards, leapt right on to the monster's pink belly—it was still lying on its back, you must under-

stand—seized the hilt of the sword, and setting his heels against the wound inside the near middle leg, he gave a mighty pull. Out slipped the puissant blade ; in an instant Jack had felt the point, proved it uninjured, and had raised it aloft to kiss the hilt.

Then, to our horror, Jack and the sword disappeared in the tumult. So fierce and quick was the Dragon's upheaval and recovery of its feet and wits, that none of us could see what was a-doing. Round and round flew the Dragon, its tail flying out and whipping the keep with resounding lashes ; its greeny-blue scales started out and fell tinkling like tin pennies ; the flames and smoke rushed round like Catherine-wheel fireworks. Now and again we had glimpses of a dazzling white gleam from the puissant sword, flashing to and fro, up and down, with such amazing rapidity and orderly persistence, that we could not but believe our Champion was doing something more than holding his own. How many minutes the fight lasted, I cannot possibly think. I know that Kit and I gripped hands in one understanding—namely, that it was Jack's own Dragon and that he alone could slay it. Jill stood with Curdie's bridle over her arm, she too with the same thought, that not even the Champion's faithful charger could now help. Then it was that I saw Jill was spinning again ; her distaff was full of fleece once more ; and her spindle was fast filling—spinning, spinning, as though this were the one thing that might be done to help her twin-brother.

We were all four thinking the fight could not go on much longer when it became clear that the long lash of the Dragon's tail was in difficulties. In many places it looked as if it were tied up in loops, and could not move freely. It was curious, because we did not think Jack's sword could have wounded

it ; nor would its lashings against the keep have doubled and looped and knotted it up in this extraordinary way. Anyhow, the immediate consequence was that the reptile was hampered ; every movement became slower, and slower, and slower, till at last we could see that the tail was so mixed up—tied up, indeed—with the hind-legs that they could hardly move. It looked to me as if tail and legs had been bound up together by a perfect cobweb of the very same thread that had been my clue : which proved, indeed, to be the case.

But now Jack's strength was nearly spent. He had his back to the wall of the keep. Just above him was a great, cross-barred window, out of which the blue-eyed, imprisoned fairy girls were watching their Champion's strife. His surcoat was splashed with mud, though the great cross shone through it like a rosy flame. His legs were covered with grime and bits of silver-green scales. His basnet had saved his head from many a slashing blow ; but its silver hardly shone more than the child's white face within it. All around him rolled the murky smoke, though ripped into tatters by the champion's puissant sword, that flashed like midnight lightning. Brave as her brother stood Jillie, spinning and spinning, now screening her eyes from the terrible sight, now looking intently at all a-doing, hoping thereby to help his bright courage.

The Dragon lifted its sound fore-paw to crush its enemy against the wall ; but, its weight being now put upon the wounded opposite leg, it slipped and threw up the attacking leg as if to recover itself. With a quick thrust Jack buried his sword deep in his enemy's black heart. The Dragon fell over on its back with such a shock that the brazen walls all crumpled and crumbled up.

Our Champion, Sir Jack, had won his day and given freedom to hundreds of weeping and dry-eyed fairy slaves. The Terror of Belmarket was at last beaten into nothing but a heap of scales and skin, bones and teeth, all cold, stiff, and shameful. Jill's rapid spinning from her magic distaff must have been the one thing that could help her brother in the fight ; little wonder indeed that the monster had so dreaded her spindle !

The fight ended in the most unprecedented manner. As the evil monster rolled over, there darted out from beneath it the Witch on her broomstick. As they rose they got entangled in the invisible clue, just as a fly will rush headlong into a spider's web. Now the air was full of the almost invisible clue. It tripped up the broomstick, which then flew round and round as though tethered at one end in mid-air ; and the old Witch had to hang on by hands and knees and pointed teeth for dear life. But presently she got free from her stick and the clue, and shot up to the top of the keep. There stood Black Puss with arched back, spitting at her mistress and trying with her cruel claws to keep her off. But the Witch was well used to such un-friendliness from her bosom friend. She rose a little higher in the air and then plumped down astride Black Puss's arch. Then away the two flew towards Raggaplas.

Curdie was now quite sound again ; and while Jack and Jill, Kit and I were all laughing and talking over recent events, he, after several unsuccessful leaps, caught the broomstick and brought it to earth. Though it smelt of burning brimstone and was hot to his nose and tongue, he gingerly carried it up to the dead reptile's head and set it crosswise in the fearful mouth, the teeth of which instantly closed upon and held it. To the stick was still hanging a

quantity of the silken clue. Most cleverly Curdie twisted this into a rope, with which he then lashed together the Dragon's jaws so as to keep the broomstick safe between them.

"It's an ill clue that does nobody a bad turn," he said.

When he came back to us, he found Jillie writing a letter and Jack dangling his grimy legs in the pool.

"Curdie, my brave, shaggy charger," said Jack, loosening his girths to ease the saddle, "what have you been up to?"

"I've set a thief to hold a thief, Sir Jack, so that your grateful people shall have something to drag the old snake along with; for, as soon as Miss Matthew and Master Fanny brought them the good news, they began to prepare for a triumphal entry into Raggaplas."

But Jack said he thought he'd rather go home to mother, and have nothing more to do with dragons. Then he laughed because he said the fishes did tickle his legs so. They were all rubbing their silvery bodies against his feet and legs to get the mud and scales off; but they tickled him so much that he couldn't help kicking as well as laughing.

This was Jillie's last letter home:—

"Darling little Mother,

"Jack has done him fine. The Dragon is deaded, and Curdie has tide up the witch's broom in its fangy mouth. Please expect us home to breakfast we hope. Kit and Trystie are here, and the majik clue is all mixed up with the dead dragon. So we don't know the way and O we have lots and lots to tell, for the real story is nearly told I think. But thers Raggaplas and the young Scarecros to come and Dulcigay our little friend. We are going to find

her, O Mother Jack and me wants you terrible. It's yers and yers since we came. Mother, Jack is terrible brave and hows old Mrs. Toad. Give it our best love and you too Mother. I think we are good children and Jack's a real champion and has done the beastly dragon just as dead as dead. He stuck his pwissant sword, is that right, I forget, rite thro its black heart. One day long ago I cut its clors with my sizzers, but it slapt my face and tor my frock I couldn't help it please because I was giving him a potry lesson. But I'm sorry its ded I told him he could have a shake down in our barn if he was good but he woodn't."

Meantime Kit and I had been looking for the door to the tower so as to get the little fairies free. It was so cleverly concealed in the brass plates that covered the whole tower that we were badly puzzled. But at last we found the door and inside the keep a winding stair all round the wall and up to the only room. This we found full of fairy children in a pitiable state of misery and rags, their grimy faces all streaks and smears with dried-up tears. Hanging from the rafters above were hundreds of strings of onions. The floor was strewed with chopped-up onions and horse-radish, and the air was full of pepper and dust. It was not much wonder that the little darlings wept so much ! It was as much as we could do to get them all down the stairs without our own eyes streaming. But at last they were all in the courtyard—four hundred and ninety-three of them.

No sooner had we got them seated in melancholy rows in the courtyard, and were wondering what to do next, than the black cloud, which always hovered over the brazen castle, came down lower and began to pour its rain out in sweet, rushing torrents. It was lovely ! We all seemed to

need washing and refreshing, and the rain did it thoroughly. It lasted only about three minutes, Kit says, though while it lasted it was so heavy that we could see nothing but streams of water as close together and straight as the warp on a loom. In those three minutes the pool of tears overflowed and was washed away. The dragon-scales that lay about everywhere were swept right out of the castle. The faces and clothes of the four hundred and ninety-three fairies were washed as clean as a Sunday morning. The black cloud was soon spent, and we could see everything again—blue sky, starry suns, and everything but the brazen castle. The keep was gone, and the walls and towers and turrets were gone, and in their place was the loveliest pond. Out of the bluey water poked the heads of happy fishes. They said, “We’ve no more salt tears inside us now, please, and thank you kindly, Sir Champion and Lady Jill.” Silver swans with gold beaks were swimming there. There were four hundred and ninety-three swans, and in the middle of them a black ebony gondola, with a silver and rose-coloured awning, and drawn by twelve black swans with silver beaks. The only thing that remained was the Dragon’s green body with the broomstick in its maw. It lay by the side of the pond, with one bleary eye open and its lip curled up to show one ugly fang, as if some spark of hate might still be alive in it.

## CHAPTER XXV

### HOME AGAIN

I SHALL never forget that pretty sight. The pond soon became a little lake, and the silvery river from Belmarket came running into it, filling it to the very brim and then running out at the further end, away through the Valgrif to Raggaplas. It seemed as though the whole of the Dragon's mountain was gimcrack and had become levelled to the valley when the brazen walls fell. But the Dragon itself was not gimcrack, for there lay its huge carcase sprawling by the side of the lake, with the Witch's broom-stick bound fast in its maw. Jack and Jill stood hand-in-hand watching the swans and the gondola. He looked exactly like his home-self, though in his shining mail shirt. The red linen cross still hung in front of him ; his long sword with glittering hilt was sheathed at his side ; his gold curly hair fluttered in the wind ; and his brown bare legs were brave with many scratches. Jill's everyday frock of blue linen seemed quite in keeping with Jack's heroic garb, and I thought, as she stood in her fairy shoes, that she looked every inch a princess ! So lovely was everything about us that I felt sure not even Kit, straight from the plough, nor myself, with my lilac print frock and dairy apron, looked out of keeping. Kit had on his fairy shoes, of course, and I my shabby house shoes ; but I had in my pocket the single red one which I often carry for some wise reason unknown to myself. The Leprecaun had kept its fellow when he brought us home from our expedition into Fairyland six years before.

Beautiful country was all about us — crags topped with stone-pines and grassy mountains covered with sheep and tumbling streams of water, the distant mountains beyond, and every high peak capped with a starry sun. Not far away little Belmarket was shining, its two cathedral spires rising in mystic splendour. Then, in the opposite direction, we could see, though less clearly, Raggaplas looking quite as picturesque but untidy because of the ragged bits of mist hanging around it. Jocundy, as the valley between us and Belmarket was called, seemed to be quite recovered from the blasted black look it had when Kit and I first saw it, and was now radiant with yellow gorse and rosy heather. Somehow, though the size of Kit and me was quite what was usual as compared with the Twins, everything looked so small and fairy-like, that I should not have been surprised to find that the whole scene was taking place under a canopy of bluebells in our own magic beech wood. Certain it is we were all large as life—though exactly how large or how small life is, I don't see who is to say! In the far distance, we could hear all the bells of Belmarket ringing triumphantly ; and we saw the gates open and the army, now mounted on twenty-five creamy white, winged horses, troop forth, followed by a great company in procession. There was the town band of young Trolls playing on silver bells and golden bagpipes, with lots of coloured ribbons flying to keep the time from being too correct ! After these came a dancing crowd of fairies and lambs and kids and blackbirds with gold beaks and thrushes with silver voices, and nightingales in green jackets shyly waiting a little behind till they could find cover for their mad music. Last of all came the High Custodian, the Master Smith, leading Nanny and Streaky.

The gondola now glided up to us. From under the rose-and-silver awning stepped General Leprecaun, in dazzling silver hose and a green jacket and a belt that looked like running water. He dropped on one knee before *me*, although I was a nobody ! He took from inside his jacket near his heart my fellow shoe and put it on me, so that I had to fetch from my pocket the one I had brought, and let him put it on too : the dear, wonderful little man—master that he was of waters and all fairy shoes—kissed it first !

“ Kit, me man,” he said, rising and taking my brother’s hand, “ it’s a man’s own care ye must take of her, or it’s even we’ll be with ye—the whole wide world of Fairyland ; hobgoblins and dragons and banshees and pixies and lunantishees and solid-headed trolls ; which, more betokens, it’s meself will shuperintind the ceremonies ; and, faith ! if its these can’t among them all punish ye, meself will be thirsting for a fencing bout wid ye ; so I take your hand on the bargain.”

Then he went to Jack and Jill, bowing very low. “ Lady Jill and Champion Sir Jack,” he said, “ the Queen herself bestows upon you the freedom of Belmarket—and of Smiling Mary’s apple-stall and as much toffee as ye can leave behind the two of ye ! Will it please ye and Mistress Trystie and Ploughman Kit and my Lord Curdie to enter my humble barge ? ”

So we all got in, and sat there rocking, first while the black swans were put to, and then till the procession should arrive. Quickly enough they came, and the long line marched before us, everyone bowing to Jack and Jill, who sat on raised seats under the awning in the middle of the gondola, holding hands. Then Jack got up and made the shortest speech that ever was.

“ Fairy people all ! ” he said, “ it wasn’t me that done

it. It was the puissant sword and my ladyship little sister, Jillie, with her magic thread what she spun and got tied up with the Dragon's tail."

Then he sat down, and Jillie, still holding Jack's hand, got up rosy red and said :

" Dear fairies, it *was* him, and he's terrible brave, and you should have just seen him flash his puissant sword ! "

Then she sat down, and the band belled and piped and the ribbons kept the time. Then came the General's turn :

" Jack and Jill," he said, " it's the Queen's truth I'll be telling ye. What did it all was this. Both of ye overcame the big fears ye had of little things by love for the Nanny, the lambie, and the old toad ; and then 'twas that same love for each other conquered the devil of a black bear ; and then 'twas that same love for the fairy people and the great Queen which gave you both courage—the one of you to slay, the other to spin—so that ye did between ye one of the seven wonders of the world—though there be seven times more of them than all the multiplication tables that were iver invented—bad cess to them all for keeping good children out of Fairyland ! "

Then he took me to my seat again and up jumped Jack.

" *I* know ! " said the Champion, " good people all, I prithee let's have a jorgous game."

Then all the people cried in one mighty voice, " Let's ! " and cheered again.

The Trolls then harnessed themselves with silken ropes to the broomstick in the Dragon's mouth. The monster was now as stiff and cold as iron, and its six legs stuck straight out. Two hundred and forty Trolls were needed to drag the awful reptile along. The gondola and its black swans headed the procession ; the four hundred and ninety-

three white swans followed after, each with a tattered but happy fairy on its back. Then came the Dragon and the rest of the procession. Though some came by river and some by road, the line was never broken ; for the river and road wound about, crossing and recrossing each other and never were far apart. There were bridges, too, for the river to go over the road, and aqueducts for the road to go under the river ; so all went smoothly, till they reached the tumbledown walls and broken gateway and inside-out houses of Raggaplas.

Into this place the fairies would not enter, and it would have been impossible to drag in the Dragon. General Leprecaun, High Constable Smith, and Champion Jack and Ploughman Kit had a consultation. The General persuaded them to make a great bonfire and burn the Dragon's carcase. The bonfire would be a jolly game, he said, and it would be a pity to waste it. Nor was there any difficulty in getting materials, as Raggaplas had accumulated so many things that were best burned. At first the little ragamuffins were afraid to come out and join in the fun ; but Jill soon persuaded them that it was a holiday before the work began of mending their clothes and going home to Belmarket. Then they brought out cartloads of the worst rags you ever saw and wood from houses that were altogether inside-out. All joined in digging a great hole and building a fire underneath the Dragon. By this time the stars were all set, and it was dark. But the Master Smith struck fire from his tinder-box and set light to a torch, with which he insisted that Jack himself should fire the pile. It flared up amazing fast, and everybody looked on quite silent and still. At last the Witch's broom caught fire, and one angry red flame shot up higher than all the mountains. In the middle of the flame and rushing up with it was the old Witch herself, sitting

astride her broomstick, and Black Puss on her left shoulder. The flame flew up and was lost in the blue night ; and that was the last ever seen of Witch, cat, or broomstick. The only bit left of the monster was a few yards of tail.

"Dead dragons spread no tails," said Curdie, as he picked up the scaly end of the monster and dragged it athwart the smouldering ashes.

The General had been standing with us and watching the fire.

"It's the last spark I was to see," he said, "of the murthering rascal, and by the Queen's orders, before I left ye all. The only way to give a dragon decent burial is to scatter its ashes to the winds entirely. A bit of its tail left behind might grow into a poison tree, and it's weeping would be her ladyship, Smiling Mary. Or it's a claw might scratch up a bit of life and plough a body's heart and till it for misery. Or it's a scale or two—and that's the worst of all—might be covering over a child's eyes so that never no more should she see the fairies in the flowers or the star-shine in her mother's eyes. And sure, now that ivery claw and tail-joint and scale is destroyed, it's leave I must be taking of ye all."

Then he stepped in front of me—he stood no higher than my waist—and took my hand—such a big thing for so little a one to take.

"Trystie, mavourneen, sure, but it's the heart-break entirely you are ! Even would I be with ye in size to-morrow if that same would give me a chance. But the Queen, God bless her, will be needing me still as I am. So it's deceiving ye I will *not* be. But, Kit," and he shook Kit's hand once more, "it's the proud man you'd be in troth ! Take care of her, or it's me rapier will be through that big heart of yours ! "

He leapt into his gondola and vanished, though I looked hard to see the last of him, and didn't turn back to the others at once, because—well, never mind!"

Then the morning stars rose, and we went into Raggaplas. Dulcigay came running to us with her neatly mended frock held up and full of Smiling Mary's fresh-fallen, dewy apples for our breakfast. Everywhere we saw the little people busy mending ; though some of the older ones refused to do anything of the sort because, as they said, it had become fashionable for all the *best* people to be worst dressed. Some of those even declared they didn't want to go back to Belmarket, with its perpetual bell-clappering ; and some had forgotten there ever had been such a place. Some were still very mournful, and didn't know what they wanted. These Jillie helped to get clean and tidy, but had much trouble in making them believe the dragon was really dead. Jack was busy for hours, mending old shoes ; for anyone who learns dragon-fence from our General Leprecaun learns also, without knowing or thinking about it, how to make and cobble shoes. He also drilled them in companies ; they were not very good about this, until he made them understand that orderliness and tidiness are the beginning of all dancing. Kit's work was to teach them to make pipes ; for very few can get work or play in Belmarket unless they know how to make music while the stars shine ! My part was to teach them all to spin, and I am an older hand at it than Jillie, and perhaps understand fairy difficulties better. Curdie's work was to get them all laughing and dancing. It was strange to us all to see how quickly the fairies had forgotten how to work and how to play, how to laugh and how to cry. Between us five we very soon had all those who wanted to go home working and laughing, playing and

dancing—but no tears at all! Beyond all things, Jack and Jill frequently stopped the other work for dancing to keep up the timid fairies' spirits. I never saw such a sturdy and merry pair of chubby legs as Jack's! Jill dances more daintily, of course ; but I always think there is something very captivating in little Jack's bare, sun-burned legs.

At last, when they were all ready, we started them on their way back to Belmarket. But we ourselves knew we must go in the opposite direction, because the clue that Jill had spun led us that way ; indeed, it never led back the way it had brought us. Up and out of the town we went till downhill there came to meet us Admiral S. Crow and all his children. Kit and I knew him at once, though he looked quite well, had fine shapely legs, and was tidily dressed ; his eyes were black as ever, but his face so open-hearted. All his tatters were sewn up neatly, though here and there, where a buttonhole was dragged or an elbow-hole but loosely darned, we could see he had beautiful and shining clothes underneath. The children were the same, all dressed in the strangest odds and ends, but all so neat and free, clean and fearless. Yet, now and again, a fresh tear would come to upset the tidiness ; but it would be as quickly mended. Now and again we saw, through peephole-tears, that the children too had, under their strange clothes, shining and beautiful frocks, many like birds' feathers ; and Jill was sure most of them had wings.

"I think they are birds or baby angels," she said, "and I don't think they can know that they are growing into those people, else they'd have their patch-work clothes off in half a trice!"

Jack implored the Admiral to come home with us ; he wanted Father and Mother to see what a wonderful friend



THE SCARE CROW FAMILY

he had turned out to be. But he said he did not think *they* needed him ; “ and as for the others,” he said—

“ Hark, hark ! the crows do bark,  
 ‘ The beggar is battered and brown ;  
 His legs are in rags  
 And tatters and tags,  
 And his top-hat is dear at a crown ! ’

“ Hark ! hark ! the little dogs laugh,  
 For the cat’s making love to a crow :  
 Singing hey diddle diddle,  
 With a dish for a fiddle,  
 And a spoon in the middle  
 To scrape up a tune, like a bow.

“ Hark ! hark ! but O, what a lark !  
 The dish has run off with the spoon !  
 And the scarecrow’s old rags  
 Are all bunting and flags,  
 And the cow has jumped over the moon ! ”

As I listened to this lovely nonsense, I knew I should never forget this at least : that outside things cannot spoil the deeper shining for people who can see further than their eyes can look. I understand too how one who is only a Scarecrow to some, can be really quite merry and angelic and shining bright, if only he has fairy blood in his heart and brain and limbs.

Yet we had to bid them good-bye for the present. I was sure breakfast must be ready at home by this time, and everyone wondering what had become of Kit and me.

“ You two must follow the clue,” said the Admiral, as, to my astonishment and delight, he kissed me on each cheek and shook Kit’s hands quite lovingly ; “ I brought the Twins away, and I must get them safely home. Curdie has only to leap any gate he finds, and there he is, of course ! ”

Which of us all reached home first I do not know ; but Kit and I were last. We went straight to the field he was ploughing. Finding his feet were bare, he put on his heavy boots, called his two oxen, yoked them, and walked them home, I at his side, still wearing my two red shoes.

All were in the kitchen, but not eating their breakfast, because Curdie had just arrived, and they were busy welcoming him. Mother, it seems, had been asking him questions about the Twins. He answered by leaping up at one after another, then rushing out into the garden to look over the Downs, then back to begin his leaping yet again.

"Mother, Mother," I called out, because they didn't at first see Kit and me, "the Twins must have come home to breakfast ! They always said they would. Perhaps they are still asleep."

Mother ran up to their little room in the attic. They were soon in her arms, dressed as when they went away three whole days before ; but they had left behind, either in Belmarket or in the Dragon's Castle, Jack his toy sword, cocked hat, and sabretache ; Jill her work-box, her writing-box, and her spindle. But she had a wonderful carved distaff in her hands. She cherishes it beyond all her toys ; for, whenever she looks into it, she sees some different carving upon it—a sunny pool in a cottage, two cathedral spires, a smithy, a brazen-walled castle, but never the monstrous Dragon. Jack, too, has his puissant sword in safe keeping. Only Jillie and Father and Mother and Kit and I can ever see it. We think he will need it some day for even bigger things than the Dragon he so bravely fought and slew when he delivered Belmarket from its curse.

After breakfast, we all went, the little ones racing, into the orchard. We found Nanny lying down and dozing up

against Smiling Mary ; while Streaky, spotlessly clean, was frisking about and trying to keep her foster-mother awake. Up in the old apple tree—and we could still see some of Jillie's gossamer clue fluttering in the highest boughs—Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Fanny were cooing away and preening their feathers, as though nothing in all the wide world had ever really happened.

As we stood together looking up at those gossamer threads, the cooing suddenly ceased. We had to listen as well as look up above ; for, coming from we knew not where—unless from Smiling Mary's dear old heart—we all of us heard gentle singing :

“ Never is gossamer carded and spun,  
But a finer and stronger is somewhere begun ;  
Never a dragon is beaten right sore,  
But new strength is won for the beating of more.

“ Never her fruit does an apple tree yield,  
But she dreams of pink blossoms and lambs in the field ;  
Never her petals fly off in the wind,  
But in promise of apples, ripe, rosy, and kind.

“ Consider the ravens, that sow not nor reap,  
Yet One their full barn in the heavens doth keep ;  
Never were flowers, that toil not nor spin,  
But bid children gather and carry them in.

“ Never a story is finished and told,  
But another begins just as new and as old ;  
Never is castle built up in the air,  
But the vision unfolds a strong rainbow for stair.

“ Never child loses his way in the night,  
But the house-door is open, the candle alight ;  
Never clouds thunder, and never rain pours,  
But a red sun is shining on Fairyland shores ! ”

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